IQ PREVIEW EDITION
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IQ
Live Music Intelligence

THE ARCHITECTS
LEON RAMAKERS

FORMIDABLE COOL

WOLF ALICE ON TOUR

SMASH! BANG! POWER!
Xenia Grigat 25 years in music

DESIGN OF THE TIMES
The demand driving venue projects

MIDDLE EAST
Investment paves the way for growth

THE ILMC 38 LOWDOWN
Limbering up for ILMC's sports day

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2ND EDITION

MUSIC FESTIVAL

SATURDAY 4 APRIL 2026

TICKETS AT WWW.OFFLIMITS.COM

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

Student-ertainment TIMES

SPORTS DAY SPECIAL
REGISTER AT 38.ILMC.COM

ILMC'S RETRO SPORTS DAY!

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.

We still have passes available for some events held during ILMC week.
Find out more at 38.ilmc.com/register

In addition,this year, all delegates will be put in a team, and the race will be on to gather points around the conference. As you move between events and explore partner booths, keep your eyes peeled for mini-games and challenges.
Find out more at 38.ilmc.com/game-on

The full programme

Tuesday 24 February

09:45–19:30

GREEN EVENTS & INNOVATIONS CONFERENCE

The Green Events & Innovations Conference (GEI) is the leading conference for sustainability in the live events sector.

Celebrating its 18th year, GEI welcomes industry thought-leaders, sustainability professionals, visionaries, organisations, promoters, venues, festivals, artists, innovators, businesses, governments, and more, all working to bring environmental and social sustainability to the forefront of the events, music, sports, and creative sectors.

Topics include transport, energy, food, equality, inclusivity, climate justice, design & materials usage, circularity, and much more.

More info: www.agreenerfuture.com/gei

09:30–18:00

PRIVATE COMPANY MEETINGS

A number of companies hold private meetings throughout the day.

13:30–17:30

ILMC ASSOCIATION SUMMIT

The ILMC Association Summit draws together leading live music associations to meet, network, and present best-case ideas and initiatives.

18:00–20:00

THE 'GET SET... GO!' OPENING PARTY

Host: Live Nation

ILMC kicks off *literally* this year with this major gathering that welcomes hundreds of live music professionals to two hours of complimentary wine, beer, and soft drinks. It's a chance to reunite with friends, colleagues, and competitors, and the perfect way to start ILMC.

Wednesday 25 February

07:30–08:30

THE EARLY-BIRD RUNNING CLUB

Meet for a hosted run through Hyde Park with a few other early-bird delegates. Get your boots on – it's gonna be life-affirming!

08:00–08:45

MORNING STRETCH CLASS

What better way to start the day than with a gentle stretch session to get the blood flowing, joints limbered up, and the mind focused.

09:30–09:55

NEW DELEGATES' ORIENTATION

Hosts: Gordon Masson & Lisa Henderson, IQ Magazine (UK)

An introduction to the world of ILMC for new delegates or anyone needing a quick refresher. If it's your first ILMC or you haven't quite worked out how to get the most out of the days that follow, make this your first session.

10:00–10:15

THE HEAD COACH'S BRIEFING

Host: Greg Parmley, ILMC (UK)

ILMC's head coach, with starter pistol at the ready, welcomes all this year's competitors to the starting line of ILMC 38. The official start of the conference, the light-hearted session is a quick rundown of all the key things you need to know during the week.

10:15–11:30

OPEN FORUM: SPORTING FRESH IDEAS

Chair: Detleff Kornett, DEAG (DE)

To bring fresh perspectives on the live music business at a senior level, this year's Open Forum is made up of business heads who are either new to the business or new in their role. ILMC's annual state-of-the-industry opener is a race through some of the biggest topics impacting live music right now. From global shifts to political activism, from levies and licences to what's in store during the next 24 months. If there's one ILMC session to squeeze in between meetings and dealmaking, it's this one.

11:45–12:15

WORKSHOP: VISAS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Hosts: Ben Young & Candra Johnson, OH Visas (UK)

With the world becoming increasingly complex to navigate, this short workshop will unpack the year's key changes in the visa and travel areas.

11:45–12:45

ALTERNATIVE MARKETS: ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

Chair: Alex Bruford, ROAM (UK)

With A-list tours increasingly playing multiple dates in a smaller number of key cities, savvy agents and promoters are capitalising on pent-up demand in B markets. This panel explores the opportunities that exist both off the beaten path and in former A markets and invites those with local expertise to outline what opportunities still exist, and just how important these B markets are set to become.

12:30–13:00

WORKSHOP: MONEY MATTERS ACCOUNTANCY & BUSINESS MGMT

Hosts: Steve Eggart, Wiles + Taylor & Co (US) & Kevin Offer, Hardwicke and Morris LLP (UK)

From withholding tax to currency, invoicing to international business structures, accounting in the touring sector is complex. In this workshop, we shed light on the key accountancy considerations and touring business developments in 2026.

13:15–14:15

SHOWSTOP PROCEDURE UPDATE W/PINK BOWS FOUNDATION

Hosts: Steve Allen & Dr Mark Hamilton, Showstop (UK)

Showstop recap their incredible year rolling out the only internationally accredited Showstop Procedure course.

14:00–14:45

FREEDOM OF SPEECH: LIVE MUSIC IN THE CENTRE OF THE STORM

Host: Lisa Henderson, IQ Magazine (UK)

European festival heads sit down to discuss how their teams handled unprovoked criticism, and what strategies they used to face online campaigns and backlash. As we hear first-hand about the tough decisions made to protect artistic freedom while dealing with political and public pressure, this is a must-attend discussion for festivals, promoters, venues and artist-representatives alike.

ASIA LIVE

11:45–12:30

THE TOURING BOOM & NEW ROUTING REALITY

Asia has long-since emerged as a viable touring ground, and world-class venue builds are helping to quench the ever-growing thirst for shows.

So how are the multinationals and regional operators keeping up with the demand, and what does it mean for agents and artist representatives entering the region? From the ecosystems building artists from clubs to arenas and beyond, to planned and emerging opportunities for international artists, we explore how Asia has become the most competitive touring league on the planet.

12:30–14:30

THE ASIA LIVE NETWORKING LUNCH

A five-star pan-Asian buffet and networking opportunities courtesy of Asia Live's supporters.

14:00–14:45

FESTIVALS, FANS & CULTURAL DYNAMICS

Chair: Layli Odamura, Creativeman Productions (JP)

Selling tickets in Asia isn't simply about showing up; it's about understanding radically different fan behaviours, market expectations, and cultural dynamics. From festivals that succeed by becoming city-defining brands to markets where sponsorship outweighs ticketing as the core revenue stream, Asia is writing its own commercial rulebook.

This session also examines how promoters build loyalty, adapt formats, and monetise audiences in a region where global artists, homegrown talent, and new genres all vie for attention.

15:00–15:45

K-POP: A MASTERCLASS IN FAN LOYALTY

Chair: Takayuki Suzuki, Paradeall / Norder AI (JP)

K-pop has transformed from a regional phenomenon into a global cultural powerhouse, shattering streaming records, selling out stadiums, and dominating social media feeds. Behind this meteoric rise are unrivalled fanbases built on deeply cultivated parasocial relationships between idols and their fans. K-pop artists and their agencies have cultivated unprecedented levels of loyalty and emotional investment. This session will explore these unique fan engagement strategies and how the Western world can take note.

14:00–15:00

INSIDE DUA LIPA'S 'RADICAL OPTIMISM TOUR'

Chair: Ruth Barlow, Beggars Group (UK)

Dua Lipa is one of the biggest pop stars on the planet and in 2025 cemented her place as one of this generation's must-see acts with her smash-hit *Radical Optimism Tour*.

In this session, we hear from the people involved in the planning and execution of *Radical Optimism*, as they tell the story of one of the stand-out tours of 2025.

This session is part of ILMC's IPM strand, which is supported by eps, Production Futures, Solotech & TAG

14:00–17:00

COMPLIMENTARY MASSAGE

Take a well-earned break and treat yourself to a free session with our professional back massage therapists.

14:30–15:00

WORKSHOP: DRIVING BULLYING OUT OF LIVE MUSIC

Hosts: Jen Smith & Niyi Akeju, CIISA (UK)

Workplace bullying has touched many in the live industry, but organisations are stepping up to help ensure workplaces are safe. This session, led by the Creative Industries independent Standards Authority, will explain its world-leading set of standards.

15:00–16:00

ILMC SPEED MEETING SESSION

One of the main reasons people return to ILMC year after year is the fresh connections they make and the business that gets done.

This year, we want to help that along with the addition of a new speed meeting session, which will focus on two key aspects of the business. One group will bring together buyers and sellers of talent – so agents, promoters, and festivals, and the second will unite buyers and sellers of services.

Sign-up at 38.ilmc.com/event/speed

15:15–15:45

PULLING POWER: THE RISE OF BATTERY-POWERED EVENTS

Chair: Claire O'Neill, Grid Faeries / AGF (UK)

Enthusiasm for clean and reliable energy has exploded. Battery-powered shows have been embraced by Billie Eilish, Bruce Springsteen, Massive Attack, and festivals such as LIDO, Lollapalooza, and Austin City Limits. But as interest increases, an education gap has become apparent. In this session, some of the pioneers and stakeholders behind the battery-powered events breakdown the logistics, costs, and motivations behind eco-friendly live music.

15:15–16:00

INDUSTRY LEVIES: HAS THEIR TIME COME?

Chair: Sally Dunstone, Primary Talent International (UK)

Across the world, momentum is growing for the top end of the business to give back to the grassroots. So is it just a matter of time before levies to fund new touring artists and support grassroots venues and festivals become the norm? This session will hear from those involved as we consider how commonplace levies might become, how funds are best spent, and just how such schemes might help develop the next generation of headliners.

16:00–17:00

THE HOT SEAT: ROB LIGHT

Host: Greg Parmley, ILMC (UK)

Few figures have had a greater impact on the global live music business than Rob Light. Over four decades at CAA, he's helped define what it means to represent artists at the highest level, been a part of breaking a number of artists, and enhanced the careers of countless superstars. Light's leadership and team-oriented philosophy have made CAA's music division a world leader for most of those 40+ years.

In his first-ever ILMC appearance, Light takes the Hot Seat to reflect on his remarkable career, the evolution of artist representation and the agency model, and to discuss his vision for the business.

17:00–18:00

THE WME HAPPY HOUR

The WME team invites delegates to join them for one of the highlights of the ILMC schedule. Enjoy complimentary drinks and unwind with fellow attendees.

19:15–00:00

SOHO CALLING

The fourth edition of Soho Calling will welcome 25 hotly tipped emerging artists to seven of swinging Soho's iconic stages, with ILMC delegates getting free priority access to all Soho Calling shows just by flashing their ILMC wristband.

See page 12 for more info.

A PREMIER PARTNER

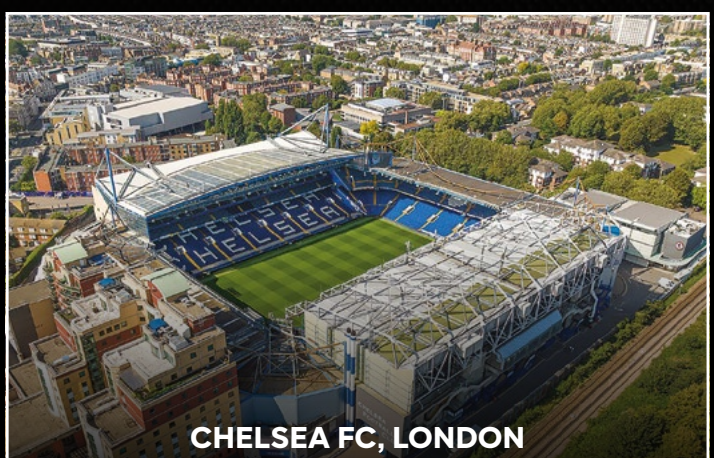
Our presence in the UK and Europe continues to grow, as we welcome more venues and partners to Legends Global. Here are just some of our most recent developments.

OLYMPIA, LONDON

A landmark redevelopment means this venue complex will offer 200+ events & welcome over 1.6m visitors per annum.

REAL MADRID CF, SPAIN

Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabéu stadium is a global icon, seating 80,000+ and hosting elite sport & major events.



CHELSEA FC, LONDON

This historic Premier League club serves 40,000+ fans every game, across General Admission & Hospitality.

AVICII ARENA, SWEDEN

Sweden's national indoor arena has recently undergone a €100m investment & will host 300+ events in 2026.

LEGENDS GLOBAL

ILMC Touring Entertainment LIVE

Dedicated to the global business of big-brand live entertainment, exhibitions, and family shows

10:00–10:45

WHO WANTS TO BE A BILLIONAIRE?

Chair: Marc Zachary, Experiential Advisors (US)

Touring entertainment ticket prices continue to represent excellent value for money, but as costs increase, what are the opportunities for maximising per-guest revenue?.

11:15–12:15

THE KEYNOTE
THE TRAITORS: LIVE EXPERIENCE

Mindgames, backstabbing, double-crossing, and lying... No, it's not a bad day as a promoter. For this year's TEL keynote interview, we'll be digging into one of the most highly anticipated launches in recent history – *The Traitors: Live Experience*. Hear from the team behind the extraordinary success story of taking one of the most popular TV shows on the planet off screen as one of the most exciting experiences in the UK today.

The Traitors: Live Experience is produced by Immersive Everywhere, Cuffe & Taylor, and Global Creative, under licence from All3Media International Ltd.

12:30–13:00

DEAL OR NO DEAL: TOURING TRENDS

Chair: Ella Baskerville, Blooloop (UK)

A fast-paced format looking at the trends shaping touring entertainment right now – and the ones that aren't worth the money. Featuring a rotating seat of producers, creative leads, innovators, and more, this session explores what's genuinely driving growth, what's hype, and offers some top tips for solving the industry's perennial challenges.

13:45–14:45

THE QUICK-FIRE SESSION

Chair: Manon Delaury, Teo (FR)

Our ever-popular whistlestop tour through the best and latest touring productions available to book now.

15:00–15:45

B-MARKET GOLDMINE

Chair: Alex Berti, Ticketmaster (UK)

With rents in some markets at a premium and audiences with a glut of entertainment at their fingertips, we look at how B markets are an important part of touring strategy.

16:00–16:45

THE PROMOTER GAMES

Chair: Susan Gloy-Kruse, CTS Eventim (DE)

This promoter-focused session explores the on-the-ground realities shaping today's market.

16:45–17:30

CLOSING DRINKS

A chance to network and enjoy complimentary drinks.

18:00–20:00

EXCLUSIVE RECEPTION
THE TRAITORS: LIVE EXPERIENCE

Are you a Faithful or are you a Traitor? Find out at *The Traitors: Live Experience*, exclusively for Touring Entertainment LIVE and ILMC delegates. Unwind after a busy day with complimentary refreshments, networking opportunities, and access to this world-first experience based on the global hit TV series.

17 JUNE 2026
SWEETEST DAY

OF THE YEAR
IN SWITZERLAND 🇨🇭

ZUCCHERO
ZURICH, HALLENSTADION

SUGAR
LAUSANNE, LES DOCKS

CHEERS FROM YOUR
SWEETEST PROMOTERS

ANDRÉ, SEB AND THÉO
AND THE WHOLE TAKK-AB TEAM

TAKK-ABE.CH

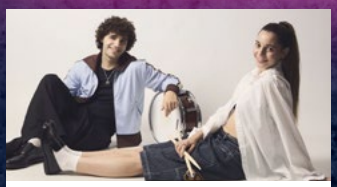
TAKK—AB

SOHO CALLING

For decades, Soho has been the beating heart of London's music culture, nurturing legendary artists and hosting groundbreaking performances that have shaped the global music landscape.

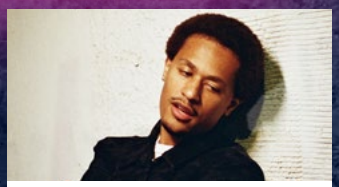
The fourth edition of Soho Calling, which takes place on Wednesday, 25 February, will honour this legendary district, bringing 25 exciting artists to seven iconic Soho stages.
Find out more at sohocalling.com

FREE PRIORITY ACCESS WITH YOUR ILMC WRISTBAND



ALEXABRIL

This Spanish duo blends pop, flamenco, groove, and modern jazz. Their improvisational approach feels raw and cinematic and has grabbed attention on social media. Debut release *ALEXABRIL* is out now.

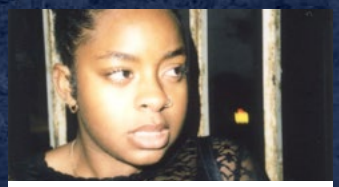


ARNO SACCO

Arno Sacco is a Belgian-born artist of Caribbean heritage whose rich, emotive voice and intimate songwriting have made him a rising figure within the new wave of European R&B.

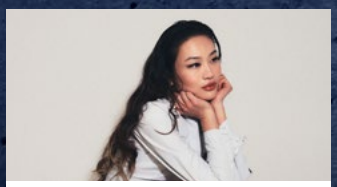
ARXX

Queer powerpop duo ARXX released second album *Good Boy* in 2024. They've toured with MUNA, Fletcher, Yungblud and The Big Moon, and composed original songs performed by the cast of BBC drama *Riot Women*.



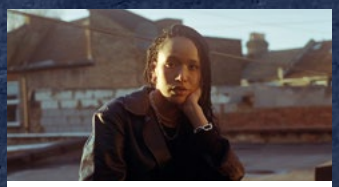
ASHAINE WHITE

Ashaine strives to be 'alternative' in the purest sense of the word. As a young black woman in music, her mindset isn't defined by a single thing. Her dream is to connect people to themselves through music.



BAOBEI

Blending next-gen UKG and house with pure pop, Baobei's music explores dualities. Her mission is to build a boundless club space where ravers can freely express themselves.

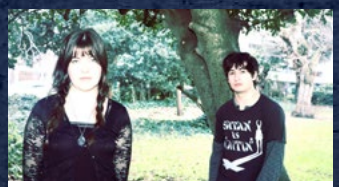


BECKY SIKASA

Becky blends neo-soul and alt-R&B into rich, introspective soundscapes. Her poetic lyrics explore love, identity, and personal transformation. Both her EPs were both shortlisted for the Scottish Album of the Year.

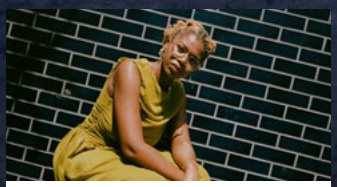
BRIAN NASTY

Brian is a multidisciplinary artist whose creativity moves fluidly between music, visual art, and subculture. Based in London, he blends sounds, visuals, and style in a way that feels effortlessly cohesive.



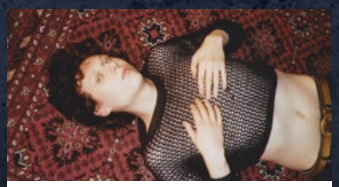
BUGBEAR

Bugbear draw on elements of electronic music, post-rock, and 2000s indie, their songs home to strange and surreal characters... the most notable being Penelope, the homemade papier-mâché goblin.



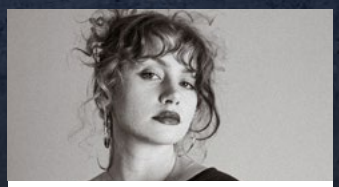
CLAUDIA ISAKI

A French-Congolese artist known for her intimate sound that blends genres, Claudia's songwriting explores faith, identity, mental health, and resilience – earning her over 30m streams globally.



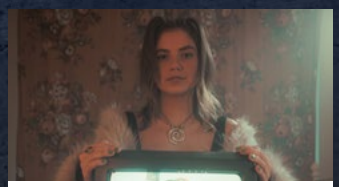
ELLIS-D

ELLiS-D has painted the walls of sweaty dives and festival stages across the continent with his dizzying brand of psychedelic art-punk and has been marked as an artist to watch by *DIY* and *Dork* magazines.



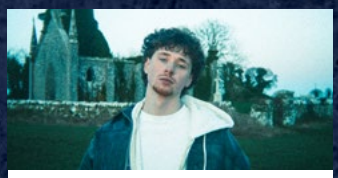
ELLUR

Ellur writes soaring indie guitar songs about growing up and acceptance. Every word counts in each song; the Halifax artist is a storyteller and lets listeners further into her world with every track.



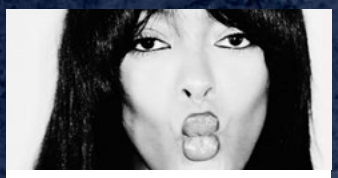
HUNNY BUZZ

Hunny Buzz's punchy surf-pop chorus has caught the attention of many. They're building a reputation supporting the likes of Vistas, Sofy, and Cassia , with appearances at Truck, 2000Trees, and Dot To Dot.



JOE BUTLER

Joe has built a network of collaborators in Ireland's alt-pop movement with artists like KhakiKid, Saint Demarcus, and F3miii wanting to work with him. Debut EP *Will It Matter Next Week*? was released last year.

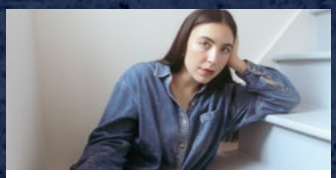


KURT.

"If you ever have the opportunity to come to a show, we form a circle. Close. Focused. A bit intense. It looks like a cult, but no one is forced to stay. Hopefully, you don't want to leave. I AM KURT."

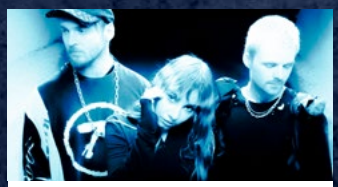
MELANIE BAKER

Melanie makes music about everything that hurts and that feels just right. She writes with unflinching honesty – swaying between noisy catharsis and quiet confession, absurd humour and deep vulnerability.



MORGANA

Fresh from supporting CMAT, opening for Dermot Kennedy and performing at Paris Fashion Week, latest single *I'm Not Going Anywhere* amassed 100k streams in just two weeks.

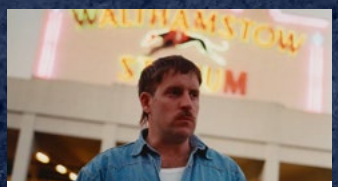


NIGHT TAPES

Debut album *portals//polarities* is a deeply immersive, genre-blurring journey. It weaves global field recordings – from Estonian swamps to Mexican mountains – into dreamy, electronic soundscapes.

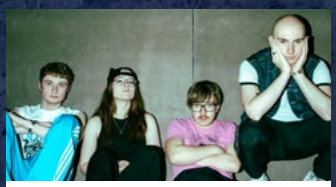
PANAM

A Barcelona-based alt-rock band transcending genres – driven by guitars, synths, and powerful vocals – Panam create an immersive sonic experience with a motivational message and a unique sound.



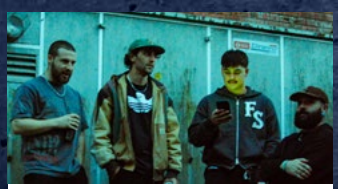
RHUMBA CLUB

Hailed by BBC 6 Music's Steve Lamacq and supported by *GQ*, *Attitude*, and *The Fader*, Rhumba Club continues to cement his place as one of the most vital voices in modern queer disco.



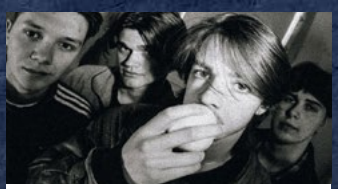
SOAPBOX

The unruly voice of Glasgow's punk underground, Soapbox are loud, unapologetic, and fiercely independent. The band has a reputation for electrifying shows and anthems that challenge the status quo.



TEETHIN

Teethin are a bold and eclectic new force blending the raw energy of punk with the pulse of electronic and dance-punk to create a sound that's as multifaceted as their roots.

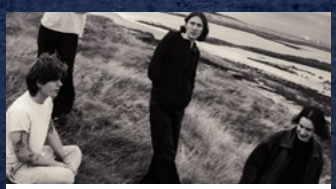


THE CLUMPS

A Norwegian grunge/rock band quickly becoming one of Scandinavia's most exciting live acts, with a raw sound that blends the urgency of Nirvana, the heaviness of METZ/Slomosa, and Radiohead at their darkest.

THUMPER

This psych-pop six-piece has toured Europe extensively and hit some major festivals. With two drummers/four guitarists, their maximalist wall of sound has long since set them apart in the Dublin music scene.



TOUGH COOKIE

Defined by their introspective depth and infectious energy, TC draw inspiration from indie/alt. music and art, combining the dynamic arrangements of heroes like Pavement, Jeff Buckley, Radiohead, and more.

TWO MAN LIFT

Two Man Lift are an amalgamation of analogue synth arpeggios, punchy bass lines, unapologetic drums, and a vocal style that is equal parts distorted, witty, and self-aware.

YANGBANS

A K-rock band that merges Eastern philosophy with modern sound. Their music is meditation in motion, weaving emotional depth, improvisation, and reflective space into what they refer to as Myoh (妙).

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Thursday 26 February

07:30–08:30

THE EARLY-BIRD RUNNING CLUB

Another fantastic opportunity to get up really f****** early! Meet for a hosted run through Hyde Park and to meet a few other early-bird delegates.

08:00–08:45

MORNING STRETCH CLASS

What better way to start the day than with a gentle stretch session to get the blood flowing, joints limbered up, and the mind focused.

09:30–10:30

WOMEN IN LIVE MORNING MIXER

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

09:45–10:45

THE VENUE'S VENUE: STADIUMS & ARENAS

Chair: James Drury, IQ / ILMC (UK)

Stadium grosses are up 300% since 2019, and arenas continue to post record box scores globally as the top end of the business sprints forward. Yet success brings its own set of challenges – packed calendars, squeezed margins, novel revenue streams, sustainability, and more. It's time to get down and dirty in the top end of the business.

11:00–11:45

LGBTIQ+MIXER

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.

11:00–11:45

MARKETING: SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Chair: Catrin White, Legends Global (UK)

The limits of marketing push ever-outwards, with teams across the world creating new ways to engage and excite fans. But at the same time, tried-and-tested techniques such as e-mail marketing continue to provide the backbone of many strategies. In this session, we will discuss how people are creating new ways of using old techniques, while also looking at how new activities are trying to engage a new generation of fans.

11:00–12:00

THE GLOCALISATION OF LIVE MUSIC

Chair: Maria May, CAA (UK)

A-list artists are bigger than ever, with more fans and markets switched on thanks to streaming services and our interconnected, online world. So what will the ever-more glocalised live music business look like in the coming years? And what's the impact on the rest of the business? This session will cover new opportunities opening up, innovative touring strategies, the shifting dynamics of global tour deals, and future growth predictions for live music and entertainment globally.

12:00–13:00

ARTIST FOCUS GROUP: HOW TO LIVE THE DREAM IN 2026

Chair: David Martin, Featured Artists Coalition (UK)

The two non-negotiables in the live music ecosystem are artists and fans. Following 2025's successful fan focus group, 2026 will see artists at different stages of their career talk about their experience of the live music industry.

12:15–13:00

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE WITH YOU: THE STATE OF THE MID-SIZED MARKET

The mid-sized market is a critical part of the talent pipeline, providing a breeding ground for the stars of tomorrow and generating significant activity for promoters. But the middle is grappling with mixed fortunes. Clubs, theatres, and academies are facing an array of challenges, from operating costs to licensing issues to fierce market competition. On the flipside, a recent surge of multinational companies investing in mid-sized venues could indicate that some see a brighter future for the 'squeezed middle.'

13:30–14:00

THE NIKOS FUND GRAND PRIZE DRAW

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 this year's charity – Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders.

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Middle East Live

10:00–10:45

THE NEW MIDDLE EAST TOURING CIRCUIT

Chair: Nadia Murtaza, Bluebird Music Management (AE)

With record levels of investment and a drive to develop from governments and commercial organisations, the Middle East is on a path to building one of the world's most important touring circuits. In this panel, we discuss the potential of the region for touring artists and productions alike, we consider what a genuinely connected touring market could look like and how new networks and homegrown IP could finally flip the Middle East from importer to exporter.

11:00–11:45

THE CHANGING BUSINESS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Chair: Jennifer Cochrane, EXIT Festival / MDLBEAST

As the dominant business model of the Middle East moves away from publicly funded events to commercially operated shows, what does it mean for the region as a whole? And as the market evolves, how are governments and local stakeholders supporting this shift while ensuring that tours and productions still land in each market? At a time of fast change for many GCC and broader Middle East markets, what role should public support take in the future, and are fee expectations from agents and managers going to shift at the same time?

12:00–12:45

WHO'S IT ALL FOR?

Chair: Hadi Rahhal, The Event Advisory (BH/SA)

We break down some of the key differences between markets while discussing the importance of audience development in building a self-sustaining touring circuit. The session will also examine affordability and socioeconomic realities sometimes misunderstood by Western agents. And for artists and their teams looking to work in the Middle East, how best to navigate cultural norms, avoid missteps, and deliver shows that resonate without diluting creativity.

12:30–14:30

THE MIDDLE EAST LIVE NETWORKING LUNCH

Hosts: Theory Eleven Entertainment, Blu Blood & PRG

The hotel's chefs present a Middle Eastern-inspired spread of cuisine across a two-hour networking lunch.

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14:00–17:00

COMPLIMENTARY MASSAGE

Take a well-earned break and treat yourself to a free session with our professional back massage therapists.

14:00–14:30

THE FUTURE OF TOUR MANAGEMENT

This 30-minute showcase session brings together TAG and Master Tour to unveil the next generation of tour management, designed for a modern, data-driven touring ecosystem.

This concise presentation is designed for anyone involved in tour planning, production, or operations who wants a clearer view of where tour management is heading, and how best-in-class tools can support better decision-making on the road and beyond.

An ILMC partner presentation

14:00–14:45

GENRE SPOTLIGHT: LATIN

Chair: Carlos Abreu, UTA (UK)

Latin music is dominating global music. The biggest artists have blazed new touring trails, selling out stadiums across the globe, while Latin influence can be heard in the music of artists from every continent. This session will look at the growth of the phenomenon, with insight from those at the heart of the scenes and businesses in non-Latin markets helping to spread the growth of this exciting genres.

14:00–15:00

IPM: PRODUCTION AT THE CENTRE

Chair: Okan Tombulca, eps (DE)

This important session looks at how leading companies and professionals are rapidly developing to keep pace with the inexorable rise of the international live music industry.

14:30–15:30

TICKETING: REWRITING THE RULE BOOK

Chair: Steve Sayer, The O2 (UK)

As ticketers become marketers, and the ticket transcends physical to become a dynamic digital product, what do the next few years hold, and how can promoters and venues expect to sell more tickets as a result? In a business built on analogue, how much more centrally will these technology companies sit, what major changes are in the pipeline and, crucially, what does it all mean for fans?

15:00–15:30

GROWING REVENUE WITHOUT RAISING PRICES: FAN SPENDING TRENDS 2026

Host: Collette Ingalls, AtVenu (UK)

A look at how fans spend on merch, food & beverage, and how venues and festivals turn that behaviour into revenue. We explore purchasing patterns by genre and event type, share real-world examples of fan engagement and sponsor integrations

An ILMC partner presentation

15:00–15:45

GENRE SPOTLIGHT: CLASSICAL

Chair: Matthew Todd, Royal Albert Hall (UK)

The mainstreaming of classical and orchestral music. The narrative of decline has attached itself to classical and orchestral music for decades. But innovative artists, promoters, and venues have shown that there are vast audiences for high-quality, accessible classical music. This session will hear from those actively engaged in the sector, sharing best practise on programming and marketing,

15:00–16:00

THE 'TRACK & FELD' ICE-CREAM EVENT

Feld Entertainment dish out ice cream and mementos during this ever-popular intermission, providing you with a welcome sugar fix and enough energy to star jump into the next round of conference sessions.

15:15–16:00

AMPLIFIED INTELLIGENCE: PRACTICAL AI IN 2026

Chair: Cliff Fluet, Lewis Silkin (UK)

AI is transforming every aspect of the live music experience. But separating the hypothetical from real-world experience of implementation and best case studies that are working right now, what's having a genuine impact? Expect an examination of how innovation can drive creativity, sustainability, and accessibility in the rapidly evolving international live music ecosystem.

#3 GLOBAL TICKET SALES

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EVENT DAYS	STADIUM ATTENDANCE	PRECINCT VISIT

啟德 KAI TAK SPORTS PARK

FOR INFO

16:00–16:45

GENRE SPOTLIGHT: COUNTRY

Chair: Anna-Sophie Mertens, Live Nation (UK)

As the fastest growing genre worldwide during the past five years, country music is crossing over to the mainstream on an increasing number of festival lineups, paving the way for headline tours for a growing roster of border-breaking stars.

Tapping into the knowledge of our expert country music delegates, we examine where the genre is making waves and where could be next in its meticulously planned global expansion.

16:00–17:00

FESTIVAL FORUM: THE 2030 VISION

Chair: Clementine Bunel, Wasserman Music (UK)

From rising production costs to competition from summer tours and ever-evolving audiences, the festival business is changing constantly. So where do leading figures predict it's all heading? We invite a lineup of festival heads to give us their five-year view, and as we peer forwards, consider what this creative and unique scene will look like in 2023.

17:00–18:00

THE THEORY ELEVEN ENTERTAINMENT HAPPY HOUR

The team behind OFFLIMITS Music Festival in Abu Dhabi invites delegates to join them for their first-ever ILMC Happy Hour.

19:00–00:00

THE 'GOING FOR GOLD' GALA DINNER & ARTHUR AWARDS

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 worthy of champions: a sparkling champagne reception, followed by a five-star, four-course banquet designed by award-winning chefs. Each dish will be paired with fine wines befitting the A-listers of live entertainment.

More than 500 of the industry's finest competitors – promoters, agents, venues, festivals, and more – will gather as the finalists are revealed, the envelopes opened, and the winners summoned to the podium to collect their hard-earned medals.

19:30–22:00

MATCH OF THE YEAR FOOTBALL

Host: Aiken Promotions

ILMC's distinctly on-theme annual footie match features the ambitious UK versus the colossal Rest of The World in a 90-minute display of epic skill, bombastic ball handling... and quite possibly mud.

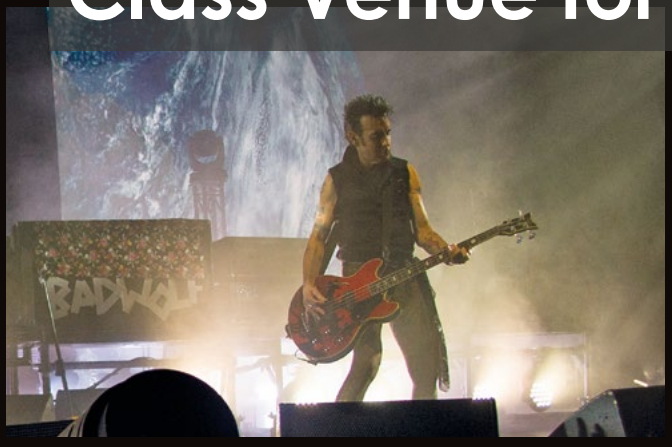
So if you fancy making a name for yourself or ending up with a leg in plaster... peter@aikenpromotions.com.

22:30–02:30

THE 'FOUL PLAY' KARAOKE & ARTHURS AFTER PARTY

Giving delegates the opportunity to showcase their athletic vocal "prowess" and demonstrate why they work on the business side of the music industry – it's an event that stretches, inexcusably, into the early hours of Friday morning.

From Rock to Classical: A World-Class Venue for All Music Genres



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Friday 27 February

ILMC futures forum

08:00–08:45

MORNING STRETCH CLASS

Get out of bed reeeally early and get your blood flowing.

09:30–09:45

NEW DELEGATES' ORIENTATION

Host: Lisa Henderson, IQ Magazine (UK)

An introduction to the world of Futures Forum for new delegates or anyone who needs a quick refresher.

09:45–10:30

MEET THE NEW BOSSES: CLASS OF 2026

Chair: Filip Košťálek, Colours of Ostrava (CZ)

A quartet of emerging execs – recognised on *IQ Magazine*'s latest New Bosses list – will reflect on their journey so far and share their vision of the business and the issues that are important to them. Expect a lively discussion that uncovers the opportunities and challenges facing execs rising through the ranks in today's business.

09:45–10:30

FAN DATA: KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Chair: Christine Osazuwa, Measure of Music (UK)

Without knowing who their fans are, artists are missing out on opportunities and income. Gatekeeping around fan information has left many teams guessing, but a new wave of tools is changing that, giving artists unprecedented visibility into their audiences and the power to build direct relationships. We explore how transparency and fan insight are reshaping the future of the music business.

10:15–11:00 & 11:30–12:15

MEET YOUR MENTOR

Futures Forum delegates have the opportunity for a one-on-one sit down with a senior industry figure in order to ask for career advice or help with a particular issue.

10:45–11:30

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT: THE HIGHS, LOWS & PLATEAUS

Chair: Rob McGee, One Fiinix Live (UK)

In an era where social media can catapult new talent from zero to hero, the definition of success for emerging artists is rapidly evolving. This session will explore the many forms success can take, along with the strategies teams use to navigate each stage of an artist's journey, and the crucial role of wellness in building an enduring touring career.

11:00–11:45 & 14:00–14:45

SOAPBOX SESSIONS

Fifteen-minute presentations by innovators, thought leaders, and inspiring individuals across the business.

11:45–12:30

ROB MY JOB

Chair: Chloé Abrahams-Duperry, AXS (UK)

Four trailblazers from across the industry will take the stage to answer delegates' burning questions about how they got to where they are today. The quartet will field questions on everything from their secrets to success to the lessons they've learned along the way. Capitalise on this rare opportunity to pick the brains of an all-star panel and gain top tips and sage advice.

12:00–12:45

PRODUCTION FUTURES: THE TALENT PIPELINE

Chair: Hannah Eakins, Production Futures (UK)

In a sector where formal training and education is sparse, how are the next generation of live music production leaders forging their own path? This session will bring together junior and senior executives working behind the scenes to discuss how production companies can better support early-career talent and cultivate a more sustainable, inclusive, and scalable workforce for the future.

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12:15–13:00
THE ILMC 38 AUTOPSY
Hosts: Greg Parmley, ILMC (UK) & James Drury, IQ Magazine (UK)
A 45-minute slot to share feedback directly with the ILMC team. Was the karaoke too loud? The drinks too warm? Or vice versa? Was the programme missing something you'd like to see?

12:30–14:30
PRODUCTION & NETWORKING LUNCH
Hosts: eps, Production Futures, Solotech & Master Tour by Eventric
With the finishing line in sight, delegates can enjoy a final nourishing and complimentary lunch.

13:00–13:45
THE POP-UP POP PUB QUIZ
Do you know your Elgar from your Engelbert Humperdinck? Your Ed Sheeran from your Eagles of Death Metal? If you're a proficient pop pundit, then the Pop-up Pop Pub Quiz is perfect for you! And there are some proper epic prizes at stake, too. No really.

So assemble a team of six perspicacious pop aficionados and put your collective skills to the test. Quizzing solo? Not a prob. We'll match you with a team.

13:45–14:30
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL 2026
Chair: Alexandra Ampofo, Metropolis Music (UK)
Promoters, get your chequebooks out – we've got the essential compilation of artists set to break in 2026. This ever-popular music-sharing session sees sharp young executives reveal the acts they've got their money on. Taking notes from old-fashioned A&R sessions, the young pros will play tracks and compare notes on ticket sales, streaming numbers, and more to determine the hottest ticket in town.

14:45–15:30
THE TOURING TROUBLESHOOT
Chair: Sandra Abrantes, Everything Is New (PT)
While top-tier arena tours remain profitable, the grassroots levels are increasingly under-resourced, putting the entire artist development pipeline at risk. Rising touring costs are forcing acts to shorten runs, reducing vital opportunities to build a live audience. This panel will take a constructive and forward-thinking look at how the industry can strengthen the foundations of grassroots and theatre-level touring.

15:00–15:45
EVERYTHING BUT POLITICS
In recent years, industry-wide boycotts have shaken the live music landscape, pushing artists and professionals to take clear positions on complex political issues. As politics and music intersect more than ever, emerging artists face difficult choices about how to navigate these moments without compromising their values or career momentum. We'll examine the growing pressures on artists and executives in an increasingly polarised environment, as well as the potential sacrifices, consequences, and responsibilities faced on all sides.

16:00–17:00
THE FUTURES FORUM KEYNOTE
Stay tuned to find out the keynote interviewee for the closing session of Futures Forum. Previous keynotes include Dua Lipa, Amyl & The Sniffers, Team Mumford & Sons, Marty Diamond, and Team Kili.

17:00–18:00
THE 'FINAL WHISTLE' CLOSING DRINKS
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. It's a last chance to chat, make a few last-minute introductions, and compare relay times.

But don't despair, although ILMC is over, you can still get your kicks at the plethora of events taking place across the throbbing metropolis of London.

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SMASH!BANG!POWER!

From a turbulent childhood to the top tier of Scandinavia's live music industry, Xenia Grigat's ascent is defined by instinct, resilience, and humanity. Here, the head promoter at Denmark's smash!bang!pow! tells **Lisa Henderson** about her triumphant 25 years in the business.

Xenia Grigat was determined to make her career in the music industry the antithesis of her upbringing. Born in Copenhagen, the promoter describes a childhood that was "full of both love and dysfunction."

"It was a very unstable home," the 47-year-old explains to *IQ*. "My father was an alcoholic, and my mother was sick a lot until she died from ovarian cancer when I was 14."

From an early age, Grigat found a safe haven in music. When her mother died in 1992 – at the height of Nirvana and Radiohead – she went "full-on grunge." Sixteen years later, following her father's death, one particular song spoke to her: *Don't Blame Your Daughter* by The Cardigans.

"It carried me through the grief until I got some help putting all of these emotions in the right places," she recalls.

It was that pull towards music that helped Grigat find her footing after leaving home at 17, turning personal upheaval into a sense of purpose. She landed a job at a local radio station, making coffee, answering phones, and going to gigs. By the time she finished high school and was offered a role at a record label, her path felt clear.

"I could've gone back to school, but I really thought that the music industry could be my education," she says. "I can just try and work my way up and never look back."

"I could've channelled my energy into something negative and gone down a very destructive path with what I've been through, but music ended up being my way out."

Grigat's way into the industry came via ICO & ET Concerts (now All Things Live), where she joined as a marketing and PR assistant in the early noughties.

"I didn't know much about the live music industry at that point; it was all about records and record sales," she says. "The live business was this unknown entity, but once I tapped into it, I was like, 'Oh, this is fun... there's so much money to be made.'"

But it wasn't until Grigat joined The Agency Group's Copenhagen office a year or so later that she got a real taste of the business at scale. Assisting prolific rock and punk agent Tobbe Lorentz at a time when *Kerrang!* was king and emo was peaking; she had to learn fast and on the job.

"At that time, his roster was just growing so fast," she remembers. "The Hives had just exploded. Mando Diao grew from small clubs to massive arenas and headline festival billing. Same with Millencolin and The Sounds. Then there was The (International) Noise Conspiracy with Dennis from Refused. It was so much fun.

"Tobbe has just never slowed down. I mean this with all the love in the world: he's a tough cookie. I was structured to begin with, but I just saw the way that he was talking to artists. He was good at reading an artist and listening to them. He was about being authentic and facing issues."

When Lorentz was appointed head of TAG's Nordic office and moved operations back to Malmö, Sweden, Grigat followed. Lorentz describes her as "instrumental" in helping build the office, which had a staff of ten at the time. "She's one of the most diligent and hardworking people I've ever worked with," he adds.

For Grigat, the challenge was as cultural as it was professional. "We had to build everything from scratch and make sure there was a good culture. We were working extreme hours, trying to structure the office and figure out what we wanted it to be. And when you're not from Sweden, there are nuances – humour, especially – that you don't always catch. You're a little bit on the outside."

Fresh fields & pastures new

The grind of commuting between Malmö and Copenhagen five days a week eventually took its toll, prompting Grigat to seek a new challenge at Copenhagen-based promoter Beatbox Concerts in 2007.

There, she assisted Mads Sørensen on what she describes as an "impeccable" roster. But it wasn't long before she was building her own, starting with LA punk band The Bronx.

"I still have a commission cheque somewhere from when they played Loppen in Copenhagen," she laughs. "My roster developed from there with José González, Robyn, Jungle, HAIM, Hozier, Ed Sheeran, Florence + The Machine, IDLES, and a lot of artists that I still work with to this day."

At the same time, Grigat acted as an international talent buyer for Roskilde, Northside, and Tinderbox, the latter two of which at the time were owned by DTD Group and FKP Scorpio.

Cultivating a reputation for bringing overseas acts to Denmark, some of Grigat's most notable bookings included Miley Cyrus (2019) and working alongside Sørensen on Frank Ocean's first festival play performance in 2017, and Radiohead the same year.

However, one of her most valuable experiences working on festivals was Haven in Copenhagen, launched by Beatbox in 2017 in corporation with a Danish brewery and Aaron and Bryce Dessner of The National, who initiated the concept. The 20,000-capacity festival was curated by the Dessner brothers and disregarded the traditional hierarchical, generic lineup.

"I learned so much from Aaron and Bryce about how you can present a festival," says Grigat. "Denmark is one of the cities in Europe that has the most festivals. If you are going to present a new festival, you need to do something completely different."

Shortly after Haven's successful (and almost sold out) debut edition, Beatbox was fully integrated into Down The Drain Group, the largest independent concert organiser in the Nordics.

That was swiftly followed by investment in 2019 from Superstruct Entertainment, a globa live events platform backed by Providence Eq Partners, prompting Grigat to explore elsewhere.

"It felt like a natural time to p Beatbox/DTD and try somethin

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THE ARCHITECTS

Celebrating the pioneers of the modern live music business

Leon Ramakers

As Mojo Concerts' first employee, Leon Ramakers has been at the forefront of the Dutch live music business for more than 55 years and was instrumental in the Netherlands becoming a global powerhouse for tours and festivals. **Gordon Masson** reports.

Born in the village of Geulle, about nine miles from Maastricht, music was always a major part of Leon Ramakers' life – but due to some fierce local rivalries, actually becoming a musician was never on the cards for him.

"There were two marching bands in the village – both award winners, so they were really high quality. They were always competing with each other, so if you were associated with one of the bands, the supporters of the other band would not want to know you. And because my mother ran the local grocery shop, I wasn't allowed to join a band, because if I did, half of her customers would stop visiting the shop."

As a result, while the majority of his friends received an education in music, family loyalties required Ramakers to miss out. But while others were honing their instrumental skills, he would spend his time indulging in his own musical passions.

"I had two windows to the world," he states. "One was my atlas, where I could dream about where I would go when I was a big boy. And the other one came to mind when I discovered radio and pop music.

"It was difficult to find any programmes for contemporary music on local radio, but I managed to discover the Top 20 on the BBC on Sunday afternoons, and it was amazing – I couldn't believe it. I would have 20 favourite songs, and that was what I was listening to every Sunday afternoon."

Upon leaving school, in 1965, Ramakers enrolled at Delft Polytechnic University, where an opportunity arose to give him his first taste of organising events.

"There was a catholic students' club that I was a member of. It was closed at weekends, because normally you would go on Friday to your mom with your dirty laundry and come back to university on the Monday morning. But a few students decided that it was time to have the club open on the weekend. And then all fingers pointed at me, because I was the only one who really knew about music. So, we started this whole thing that became successful overnight. And then one weekend, three gay guys came in and started dancing, which I thought was great. But the following Monday, I was summoned before the board of the student club because they objected to allowing gay people in. So I left and went to a general student club where I started doing cabaret shows on Wednesdays and Sundays, which also became quite successful."

With his passion for music growing, Ramakers met local promoter Berry Visser, who in 1968 had launched a concert business called Mojo Concerts from his attic apartment in Delft.

"Leon came to buy tickets for Led Zeppelin. It was the autumn of 1969, just a few months after I managed to organise Mojo's very first pop concert at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw: Jethro Tull and Soft Machine," Visser tells *IQ*. "Happiness was still quite ordinary back then; Dutch living rooms were heated with coal, black-and-white TVs were gradually being exchanged for colour sets, and the top ticket price for this double bill was 12.50 guilders!"

Detailing how he first started working with Visser, Ramakers says, "The second time I met him, he pushed a piece of paper to me, which had the names of The Birds, Pink Floyd, Jefferson Airplane, Santana. And he said, 'I'm going to do a festival.' He didn't have the money, and he didn't have a site, so he offered me 5,000 guilders if I could find either."

Once home, Ramakers used his typewriter to compose a letter to the Minister of Culture. "To my absolute amazement, a week later, my flatmates called me out of bed because the Ministry of Culture was on the phone."

A few days later, he found himself pitching the festival idea to a high-ranking civil servant. "When they asked how much money I needed, I wasn't prepared for that – I had no idea. But I told them I'd need at least 100,000 guilders. And a week later, in the mailbox of my student flat, there was a letter from the Minister of Culture granting me 25,000 guilders."

Cycling back to see Visser, Ramakers presented him with the cheque, and thus the Holland Pop Festival was born.

"Berry was able to use the Ministry's letter to help persuade the local bottler of Coca-Cola to sponsor the festival, and he did a deal with a guy who had convinced the local council to grant him a permit to hold a festival in a park in Rotterdam. And then he bought the acts from Freddie Banister, who put together the Bath Festival, so those acts would fly the day after Bath to Rotterdam to do our show. The Holland Pop Festival, June 1970, was born. However, although it was a cultural highlight in Holland, it lost a fortune."

One of the attendees of the festival was Neil Warnock MBE, now head of music worldwide at United Talent Agency.

"The first time I went to Holland, Leon was Berry Vis[illegible] runner and picked me up from the airport," says Warn[illegible] can still remember chatting to Leon about his ambi[illegible] he was fascinated by the business going on at tha[illegible]

He continues, "Berry was a hippie wild card[illegible] incredibly straight and appeared very well-[illegible]

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TAKE COVER!

In uncertain times, the importance of adequate insurance cover has never been more important to those whose income relies on the live entertainment industry. **Gordon Masson** talks to the brokers at the heart of the sector, ahead of what is looking like another hectic year.

While the rewards for completing a successful tour or event can be lucrative, the risks involved in organising such enterprises are growing, with everything from extreme weather and war to travel delays and mental health issues included in the reasons behind show postponements or cancellations.

But despite the plethora of potential hazards that exist to jeopardise touring acts, and the professionals who support them, insurance premiums for the live entertainment sector have actually been falling lately.

"Post-Covid, we lost quite a few insurers," says Charlie Connell at brokers Howden Group. "We've always had a relatively small pool of insurers that write this class of business, so post-Covid, we went from a relatively small pool to a tiny pool, and those who remained weren't deploying as big a capacity as they were pre-Covid. Historically, they might have underwritten a couple of million dollars on a tour. But after Covid, they'd restrict themselves down to maybe half a million dollars. But we've now had a couple of years where there has been less claims activity, and the upside of that is we now have more insurers getting back into the market. And the ones that remained in have said, 'We're more comfortable now taking that two million again, rather than that half a million.'"

He continues, "The falling premiums are just standard market forces: if there's more people offering cover, everyone's more competitive for business. And we've been able to push that a bit over the last year, so the rating has come down, but those providing coverage have gone up."

Tim Thornhill, director at Tysers Insurance Brokers, sees other upsides.

"When there aren't any big losses or big global catastrophes, a lot more money flows into the underwriters from private equity, for example, and it means some of the terms and conditions also improve for clients," he says. "The insurance market tends to go in cycles. You have hard markets and soft markets. A hard market is when prices go up and conditions are less favourable for clients, and soft markets are when the premiums go down, and you can often get more favourable terms. We're definitely going into that latter soft cycle at the moment."

Martin Goebbels at Miller Insurance agrees. "It's cyclical. You maybe get some new insurers come in, and that creates a bit of competition, and that's also true with the brokers. Obviously, insurers lost an awful lot of money around Covid, so it's taken a while to sort of resettle, reset, and for certain underwriters to engage with live music again."

Noting that post-Covid, prices had initially increased, Goebbels adds that the business nevertheless restructured policies in an effort to remain viable. "I think that's one of the reasons that the underwriters have excluded things like adverse weather, civil commotion, terrorism, and now offer them as separate extensions," he says.

Christian Raith, managing director of erpam gmbh, says, "The live entertainment sector has always operated in a high-risk, high-pressure environment. What has changed in recent years is not only the range of risks but the speed at which they evolve. At erpam, we are seeing a clear shift in both the questions clients are asking and the expectations they have of their insurance partners.

"At present, clients are primarily focused on ensuring that their core covers are robust and fit for purpose, rather than simply seeking the lowest premium. Event cancellation and non-appearance insurance remain central topics, particularly in light of increasing weather volatility, supply chain disruptions, and last-minute changes to touring schedules. Liability insurance – especially public and employer's liability – continues to be a fundamental requirement, with a growing emphasis on adequate limits and clear contractual alignment between organisers, venues, artists, and service providers."

> **"Obviously, insurers lost an awful lot of money around Covid, so it's taken a while to sort of resettle, reset, and for certain underwriters to engage with live music again"**
>
> **Martin Goebbels** | Miller Insurance

He adds, "In addition, we are seeing heightened interest in equipment and production insurance, particularly where high-value technical assets are moving internationally or being shared across multiple productions. For many clients, the question is no longer 'Do we have cover?' but 'Does our cover truly reflect how we operate today?'"

PLANNING

With premiums reducing, now is an ideal time for live music professionals to look at their calendars for 2026 and figure out what coverage they might need in the next 12 months.

Goebbels says, "A good starting point is whether you can afford to insure, or whether you can afford not to insure. That's probably more relevant for the younger bands who believe they cannot afford the premium within their small budgets. But I'd advise them to simply get quotes in early. So many times, people say it's too expensive. But when you ask what the quote was, they reply 'Oh, we didn't bother. We just know it's expensive.' But the reality is, if you can get the quotes early, that then allows you to take a measured decision as to what level of cover you want – whether you want to cover just your costs and expenses, or whether you want to cover your profit as well, and potentially other income like merchandise or sponsorship revenue."

The reality, however, can be somewhat different.

"We all know people who leave their exam revision until the night before and others that start it months in advance with a planner. And you can't change people's personalities," observes Steven Howell at Howden Group. "The good thing for us is that a lot of our business comes through accountants and business managers, who are very organised by nature. As soon as they are aware of a tour, they will request insurance quotes. But even for the people that leave it late, we've got a big team that can respond. We've had requests for tours that start next week, and it's now the middle of the week or even Friday, and we've turned them around because we've got that relationship with the underwriters, and we've got the people that know how to do that."

One changing dynamic is the artist's increased influence on tour schedules, which is also a factor that insurers look upon favourably.

Goebbels explains, "When you're talking about the major tours, then quite often the [show] dates are quite well spaced out, because people have come to realise that, especially with the high levels of money involved, they can't afford to ram an artist into a potentially damaging work schedule. That's obviously a challenge when they need to get as many shows in as they can. But of course, the insurance implications of that, or the potential cancellation implications, are pretty high, both from an illness point of view of overwork, but also from a travel delay standpoint in these days of horrendous weather, flight cancellations, and the likes."

Goebbels laments, "The trouble is, the tour generally is booked by the time we even get to talk to the client. But talking to the broker as early as possible and getting their thoughts on what's doable and what's not doable from an insurance point of view is beneficial for everyone."

Howden's Connell concurs that insurance
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ARABIAN NIGHTS

Our market focus expert, **Adam Woods**, visits this fascinating and ever-changing region to get the low down on the Middle East's flourishing live entertainment business.

Fun Lovin' Criminals were one of the acts to grace the Meteor Stage at last year's OFFLIMITS Music Festival in Abu Dhabi

In the Middle East, everyone has a different set of reasons for putting on a show. From the lavishly funded state entertainment projects of Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi to the hard-nosed entertainment hub of Dubai, and from the high-end venues of Bahrain and Qatar to the rebounding markets of Egypt and Lebanon – no two motivations are quite the same.

"The Middle East is not a single market," says Cosmin Ivan, managing director of independent regional ticketing company Platinumlist, which recorded a 45% growth in events last year. "It's a constellation of distinct, fast-evolving markets with different consumer behaviours, price sensitivities, and content preferences."

But in spite of those differences, and after many false starts and much gradual infrastructural development, in recent years, a very real circuit has finally formed. And when you throw in growing nearby(-ish) markets such as India, South Africa, Türkiye, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, it is apparent that something is being built that is diverse, multi-faceted, and sustainable – barring disasters – for years to come.

Many factors have built to this moment: serious spadework by global promoters and other corporates; heavy public and private investment in modern venues; generous state-sponsored fees in some markets and entrepreneurial spirit in others – all increasingly combined with a new spirit of regional cooperation.

"I think it's always a choice as to whether or not you go to Riyadh or Doha or Abu Dhabi or Dubai, so there is that competition," says David Powell, chief business development and strategy officer at Abu Dhabi's events and venue group Ethara and MD of OVG Middle East.

"But as far as programming content goes, there's now much more synergy. When we book our concerts for Formula 1, you see a lot of those artists perform in Saudi Arabia the week after. Post Malone played here, and then he went on to play SOUNDSTORM in Saudi Arabia. Benson Boone did the same. And we work with our partners in Bahrain, in Saudi Arabia, and in Qatar, purposefully to set up those routings. Whereas, I think before it was: choose one of the countries and then move on."

Where the big prize in years gone by was to draw globally recognised artists for headline shows, today's business is increasingly based on a more mature model.

"There has been a shift from one-off spectacle to sustainable ecosystems," says Ivan. "The region has been brilliant at attracting global headline acts – Ed Sheeran in Qatar; Formula 1 in Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and Saudi; Travis Scott across multiple markets. But there's a conscious shift now toward building year-round entertainment infrastructure."

But while the market is evolving and opportunities are opening up for promoters, some things don't change as fast as others in a region that is well-known for paying well, says Mark Jan Kar, general manager of Dubai's Coca-Cola Arena.

"Ultimately, artists and artists management want to get paid. So, the majority of the deals are still on a flat fee," he says. "Some are moving that needle, and collectively, we're trying. But for the last 20 years, they've been paid to play in the sandpit, and they expect that."

None of this would be happening without an increasingly eager audience. In the GCC states, prosperous expats abound, and Saudi Arabia offers a bigger, younger population than the region has seen before – one that is heading for 40m, of which 70% are under the age of 35.

Music tourism also makes an increasingly significant contribution, drawing startling numbers of fans from India, Europe, and beyond whenever the names are big eno

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FORMIDABLE COOL

As Wolf Alice fulfil their destiny as arena headliners, **Derek Robertson** goes behind the scenes to talk to the industry professionals who have helped the band achieve their touring ambitions.

For a band whose earliest acclaim was spun out of late-night blog buzz and word-of-mouth, Wolf Alice have always worn their indie credentials like a badge of honour. Critics adored them, taste-makers charted their ascent, and fans poured over every twist in a sound that has defied pigeonholing and been described as everything from shoegaze to bruised alt-rock. But the success of their *The Clearing* world tour proves they're no longer just an endearing indie favourite popping up at sweaty venues and UK arenas – they're staking their claim to a global stage. For these four Londoners now have the songs, the swagger, and the stagecraft to justify the prophetically whispered status of "headliner-in-waiting" that's trailed them for years.

The Clearing run of dates saw Wolf Alice make that long-anticipated leap, the band recalibrating their ambitions to match their momentum. Stepping into bigger rooms across Europe and the US, as well as into new territories, the show is designed not just to hold its own, but to *command* – showcasing a band ready to scale up while still landing every emotional punch. With further legs in Asia, South America, and Australasia confirmed, and a summer of festival headlines locked in, this feels like the moment where reverence turns into reach, and top of the bill becomes their natural habitat.

Heavenward

So how *do* you navigate the transition from indie darlings to global headlining superstars? Matt Bates of Primary Talent, the band's agent, frames it less as a blitz of exposure and more as thoughtful persistence. "We always knew that after being away, this would be a long campaign, and that we'd try to explore every market possible," he says. For Wolf Alice, the strategy was never to

The band played two sold-out shows at The O2 in London © Harriet Bols

leapfrog; it was to amass, to linger, to let demand grow organically in places that once felt elusive. "Everything about *The Clearing* campaign was a big step up, and the live plan followed suit – the idea was to take the album global, and to make sure the band visited everywhere."

The notion of a truly global campaign is echoed by Stephen Taverner, one half of the band's management team, who emphasises how this new stage of Wolf Alice's career has opened doors previously closed. "We're visiting territories that we've never been to before, like South America and some parts of Southeast Asia," he says. The resonance in those new territories has been tangible: China's Beijing and Shanghai dates sold out instantly, prompting additions and plans to return later in the year. "They've played there before, so it's great to see it continuing to grow."

Wolf Alice will also be playing Bangkok, Jakarta, and Singapore, but they'll start 2026 with a destination that's always been on their wish list – Japan. "We haven't been able to play there on previous albums," explains Taverner, "but this time, there is more demand." Chiba, on Tokyo Bay, is their destination, with hopes that it will be the first of many future visits.

The Clearing's odyssey began in early September in the US, a territory that has traditionally proved notoriously tricky for British indie acts to crack. The band adopted what Bates calls a "steady and slow" approach, one that prioritises old-fashioned graft and putting in the hard miles on the road. "America is a place the band have devoted a lot of time to in this campaign, and it's really growing into a powerful market for them."

Taverner elaborates on the practicalities. "The US has moved up another level on this album in terms of ticket sales, so building in time to cover such a huge country is very important. At least two tours of North America during a campaign always feels about right to me." The band's selective use of underplays in the US – intimate shows planted before full tours – has been one element of that measured growth, a way to seed excitement in fertile ground long before festival season hits.

And hit it they will. Longer tours and a sprawling global footprint inevitably raise questions about how headline festival appearances fit around – or within – a campaign as expansive as this one. For Wolf Alice, the answer has been strategic restraint. "We don't tour in the same markets or cities as the festivals we're looking to play later on," explains Taverner, a decision that keeps standalone shows and major summer billing in respectful balance.

That's why Spain and Portugal were absent from their 2025 European leg: they're slated to top Madrid's Mad Cool bill and serve as a premier draw at Lisbon's NOS Alive this year. The South American narrative is similar – the band will headline São Paulo's C6 Fest, followed by standalone shows in Rio and Mexico City, and an as-yet-unannounced date in Argentina. "The new British/Irish alt-rock scene is growing massively in South America – I don't think I've seen demand like this in quite some time," Taverner observes.

All told, the band currently have 12 festival appearances confirmed for summer 2026, and there's every chance that number could rise. It's an ambitious slate for any artist; for Wolf Alice, fresh off a 57-date, nine-month worldwide tour, it's a testament to their endurance and appetite for the long haul. "I can't see many other acts playing as many festivals as they are next year, but they're an extremely hard-working band and willing to put in the effort to always deliver," says Bates. "I'm grateful to have an act willing to do that."

Those plans will be music to the ears of transport specialists Zeppelin Nightliners, whose Christian Weidenholzer notes that they've been working with Wolf Alice since day one. "It's very special to accompany an act over the years and witness such potential and growth. The crowd grows, and with it the venues, the size of the touring crew, the number of trucks, and of course, the buses." He adds, "Standing in The O2 and watching the band, while being part of it all, is definitely a goosebump moment."

Visions of a live

And what of the show itself? For an indie band playing arenas, the tension between spectacle and sincerity is ever present: how much do you embellish, and how much do you let the music speak? Tasked with negotiating that line was creative director Chiara Stephenson. She describes her guiding question simply: how do you elevate five people on a blank stage in a cavernous room without resorting to artifice? Her answer was less about digital dazzle and more about architectural presence – drawing on pure geometry, historical references as varied as Las Vegas interiors, glam rock, London's liberal clubhouses, the glamour of the Roaring Twenties, and the band's innate qualities. "I wanted them to reach dizzy heights, but also keep things real, for *they* are the magic," she says.

She began with a familiar motif, the five-pointed star – a shape that has hovered around Wolf Alice's imagery for years – and deconstructed it into a language of angles and planes. The result is a design that foregrounds the band while conjuring a world that feels both tactile and cinematic. Central to this was the installation of a vast slash foil curtain that looms over the band and the crowd, catching and refracting light.

The band themselves were, according to production manager Mark Jones, "very involved from the start, all the way through to the final design – Ellie in particular had a very clear vision as to how it should end up." He adds that as this was their first-ever run as an arena headliner, being selective as to how to make an impact is key; "On shorter runs – we did nine arenas in the UK and Ireland – all of the setup costs, design fees, and manufacturing costs take up a lot of the budget [illegible] he explains. "That's why the band made a ch[illegible] not to use a US video wall and put that bud[illegible] more theatrical moments. It was def[illegible] right choice, as the show looked fan[illegible]

Partly, this came through el[illegible] curtain beyond being a straig[illegible] Lighting designer Matt D[illegible] son's scenic sensibility[illegible] texture and dimens[illegible] ness. Working wi[illegible] be "slightly u[illegible]

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SPORTS DAY "ORIGINS"

Ever wondered where the weird and wonderful events of a traditional sports day come from? So did editor **Gordon Masson**, so, minutes before **IQ**'s deadline, he conducted vigorous research, before making up some stuff by way of explanation...

Egg-and-Spoon Race

With its origins dating back to Tudor times, it's believed that this event has royal links. Serial wife-killer Henry VIII was apparently very particular about his boiled eggs being served at a temperature that would not trouble the regal palate. As a result, several footmen would collect an egg each, place it on a spoon, and race through the palace corridors so that it was cooled to his majesty's liking by the time they arrived in the royal dining room. King Charles apparently keeps the tradition alive to this day by insisting that multiple eggs are boiled so he can choose which one is just right for *his* precious palate. Yes – that King Charles who bangs on about the environment but doesn't mind that hundreds of eggs per year are binned...

Sack Race

Awash with mountains of cash, bored record company executives would menace staff on a quarterly basis by pitting their minions against each other in a humiliating contest to find out who the next person would be to lose their job, or "get the sack." The unfortunate loser would be made to leave the label's premises, bound in a hessian sack, to exacerbate their plight. The nepo babies of these execs then introduced a bastardised version of the race to their school sports events.

Three-Legged Race

Ask any search engine about this phenomenon and you'll learn that it "has roots in traditional, informal, cooperative games rather than a specific documented origin." Nonsense. When Robert the Bruce defeated the English army at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, the sheer numbers of soldiers that surrendered to the Scottish king overwhelmed the number of shackles that his blacksmiths could make. So Robert simply ordered that the prisoners be bound together by the leg, and sent them scurrying homeward, to think again.

Tug of War

Dating back to ancient civilisations in Greece, Egypt, China, and India, the tug of war is regarded as the original team sport and show of strength. The losers in those primitive days would ritualistically have to pay for the equipment, hence the expression 'money for old rope.' These days, the ritual is often associated with the battle between artist representatives and those forces that aim to pull the talent toward global touring deals.

Wheelbarrow Race

Sadly, nothing to do with the *Kama Sutra*. In the late 1400s, Ivan the Great was at the height of his power. Extraordinarily shortsighted, his daughter, Rebecca, was so self-conscious about the thick spectacles that she had to wear (she wasn't known as the original 'Speccy Becky' for nothing), that a huge prize was offered to anyone who could correct the vision of the princess. Step forward little-known inventor Leonardo da Vinci, with the first-ever glass contact lenses. However, as much of imperial life involved prancing about on horseback, Rebecca's lenses were forever popping out. Da Vinci's solution was to offer peasants a prize for finding the rogue lens, decreeing that they pair up, with "one participant (the 'driver') holding the ankles of their partner (the 'wheelbarrow'), who should walk on their hands, as if mimicking a wheelbarrow's movement – whilst scouring the cursed ground to find and retrieve the royal eyepiece."

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