May 2024

An open letter ahead of the 2024 General Election

I am writing an open letter on behalf of members of UK Music, the collective voice of the UK's world-leading music industry, to the leaders of all political parties contesting the 2024 UK General Election. Our mission is to bring together all sectors of the music industry in order to collaborate, campaign and champion music.

Ahead of this crucial election on 4th July, I would like to emphasise the economic and social benefits of music and why it is vital that the next Government supports one of our most important sectors. I respectfully ask that you kindly give consideration to this letter when formulating the manifestos and other policy proposals upon which you will be campaigning on in the coming weeks.

The UK music industry is a key national asset. The UK is home to some of the biggest artists, largest festivals, busiest venues, and most iconic studios in the world. Glastonbury and Abbey Road are famous across the globe and drive huge amounts of economic impact. The UK music industry as a whole contributes £6.7 billion to the UK economy. It also employs 210,000 people: as many as the insurance, steel, and pharmaceutical industries combined.

Music represents the best of British to the world, with our musicians, songwriters, and producers defining the global soundtrack and shaping our reputation. Artists such as Harry Styles, Adele, Dua Lipa, Stormzy and Ed Sheeran are household names. Music brings in £4 billion in export revenue and we are one of only three net exporters of music globally. In recorded music, the UK is the second largest exporter of music after only the US.

The current Government has identified the creative industries as one of five priority sectors for economic growth. According to Goldman Sachs, global music market net revenues are estimated to grow by 53% by 2030, with the recorded music, music publishing and live music markets all increasing substantially.

In this context, there is increasing global competition, however, from other countries vying for a share of this expanding market. Growing domestic markets, such as those in Latin America and South Korea, are putting pressure on the UK's position. Despite its success, the UK's global music share dropped to 12% in 2022, down from a peak of 17% in 2015. We also see governments in Australia and Canada make direct strategic interventions to back their music industries.

We know there is huge growth potential in the UK music industry, but without action, we risk being overtaken by countries who are more proactive and ambitious in promoting and supporting their music sectors.

This is why, as called for last September in A Manifesto for Music, **we want the next Government to develop a comprehensive, medium to long-term world-leading strategy for growth.** A forward-thinking roadmap, formulated by policymakers and industry, will drive growth and success through this crucial period. As set out in A Manifesto for Music, there are five key asks that would be crucial to any strategy:

1. **Ensure AI supports human artistry through strong copyright standards, clear labelling and record keeping requirements, and protections for the personality rights of music makers.**

The accelerating development and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) tools brings opportunities and challenges for the music sector. Many generative AI systems are being developed without regard to the rights of others and without the consent of the original music makers or rightsholders. The next Government should rule out any copyright exception that will allow AI developers to use copyright-protected music without permission. They should also ensure records of works ingested by AI are kept; that AI generated music is clearly labelled as such; and introduce protections for personality rights of music makers to prevent AI unlawfully replicating the voices of artists.

2. **Fix the European touring crisis by securing a Cultural Touring Agreement with the EU.**

In 2019, the EU was the UK's largest live music market, worth four times the size of the US (the UK's second largest market). Increased bureaucracy for touring musicians following the UK's exit from the EU is limiting sector growth. Issues include restrictive visas and work permits, complicated red tape around carnets, and barriers related to selling merchandise and truck hire. A Cultural Touring Agreement with the EU should be prioritised, potentially as part of the anticipated 2026 Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) review.

3. **Introduce a tax credit to encourage new UK music production.**

Unlike other creative sectors, such as film, TV, and video games, the UK music industry does not benefit from a tax credit scheme. This puts the UK at a competitive disadvantage compared to other established music markets, such as France, Australia, and some US states, who offer such incentives. A tax credit supporting music creation in the UK would allow us to retain our homegrown talent and attract significant inward investment, helping to ensure that the UK is a global destination for music making.

4. **Invest millions more in music education and recruit 1,000 more music teachers.**

High quality music education is vital for securing our talent pipeline and producing the highly skilled music professionals of the future. But music education needs investment and support. Over the last decade, GCSE music participation has declined by nearly 25%, and A-Level music enrolments have nearly halved. Inadequate investment in state music education is increasing inequality of opportunity: 50% of children at independent schools receive sustained music tuition, compared to just 15% in state schools. The next Government must work to create more opportunities for children to learn music.

In addition, there are currently nearly 1,000 fewer secondary school music teachers today than there were in 2012. Trainee music teachers receive a £10,000 bursary, not even half of the amount those training to teach sciences, maths, geography, and languages receive. Thus, there is less financial incentive to train as a music teacher compared to other subjects. Addressing this is crucial to increasing music teacher numbers and ensuring effective music education.

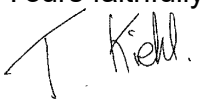
5. **Secure a fair deal for music lovers by ending rip-off secondary ticketing practices.**

Many online secondary ticketing platforms allow event tickets to be resold at prices significantly above face value. Just hours after Eurovision 2023 tickets sold out, they appeared on these platforms for up to £9,000 - more than 20 times their original price. Extortionate resale prices, alongside practices like bulk-buying and speculative selling, only serve to enrich resellers and exploit fans. The next Government should protect music lovers by introducing measures to curb these practices.

Delivering on these asks and achieving a national music strategy will help deliver the action needed to keep the UK at the forefront of the global music industry.

I wish you the best of luck in your campaigning and hope that supporting music is a key part of your manifestos. Together, we can work together to make the UK the best place in the world to create, perform and consume music.

Yours faithfully,



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