

# The Musician

Journal of the Musicians' Union  
Winter 2017  
[theMU.org](http://theMU.org)

## **Collective Bargaining**

A behind-the-scenes look at  
this bedrock of the MU's work

## **Disability In Music**

The new initiatives that are driving  
inclusivity for disabled musicians

## **Regional Focus: Belfast**

A look at the vibrant music scene  
in Northern Ireland's capital city

## **Virtual Reality**

How this burgeoning technology  
offers huge potential for musicians

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# Opportunity For All

MU General Secretary Horace Trubridge highlights the Union's urgent recommendations for the future of music education provision in the UK.

**I feel blessed and privileged to have spent my life working in our wonderful profession, first as a performer and then working with and for musicians. Of course, none of this would have happened if, when my mum took me up to the bulging-at-the-seams comprehensive school for my induction day, the teachers had said that if I wanted to learn a musical instrument my mum would have to pay for the lessons. She simply didn't have the money to spare.**

On that first day, having been shown the science labs, the school hall and the football pitches, we were ushered into the music department and asked which instrument we – by which I mean me and my fellow scared-to-bits newbies – would like to learn. Not a problem for me – Acker Bilk's *Stranger On The Shore* was riding high in the charts and so it had to be the clarinet.

## **The gift of learning**

From that point on, my path in life was decided and I owe so much to the government of the day that made sure that all kids, no matter how humble their roots, had the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. And what an amazing body of musicians, composers and songwriters were born out of that 'available to all' opportunity. Our impressive £4.4bn music industry owes much to the policies of previous governments who believed that the gift of learning a musical instrument should be available to all and not simply a privilege open only to those who can afford it.

It seems to me that we are now entering into an era in our profession when only a very narrow social stream of young people will make up the musicians of tomorrow. How will the tradition of fantastic bands and artists rising up from the housing estates and low-to-no income families continue? Bands like Madness, Pulp, Manic Street Preachers and so many others with great stories and real, honest social messages to sing about. How will the UK's wonderful orchestras fulfil the demands of the funding bodies to increase diversity within their ranks, when the very people that they want to attract are denied access to music education.



## **Critical spotlight**

The Union's Education and Training Department has recently published its 2017 Education Report. This brilliant report shines a critical spotlight on instrumental music provision in the UK and makes a number of urgent recommendations. Overriding all of the recommendations is the principle that all children and young people should have the chance to learn a musical instrument and access to meaningful musical experiences through which to learn and develop. It is widely accepted that learning a musical instrument is an aid to learning generally.

It is also widely accepted that young people entering our profession from all social backgrounds is what has made our music so diverse and our industry great. Future governments must recognise these facts and reinvest in musical education in the UK if we are going to maintain our strong position on the international stage.

**Horace Trubridge**

**To hear more from Horace, visit [theMU.org](http://theMU.org)**

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## **MUSICIANS' UNION KEY BENEFITS**

- Insurance schemes
- Legal assistance
- Nationwide network
- Rights protection
- Career and business advice

**For more membership benefits visit  
[theMU.org/benefits](https://theMU.org/benefits)**

**Check your membership details online at  
[theMU.org](https://theMU.org)**

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### **Andrew Stewart**

Andrew writes for *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Classical Music* and *BBC Music Magazine*, among others. He is also Director of Southwark Voices. p12

### **Katie Nicholls**

Katie is a freelance journalist and editor whose features and reviews have appeared in titles such as *Mojo*, *The Guardian* and *Kerrang!* p24

### **Andy Fyfe**

For over 30 years Andy's work has appeared in *Smash Hits*, *NME*, *Mojo*, *Record Collector*, *Country Music*, *Q*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Guardian*. p16

### **Roy Delaney**

Roy has written for *Metal Hammer*, *Classic Rock* and *Melody Maker*, and is the lead singer and drummer with the two-piece punk rock band Hacksaw. p20

## **Lee Henry**

Lee lives in Derry, Northern Ireland. He began his career with BBC Northern Ireland, and currently writes for *The Sunday Times* and *Belfast Telegraph*. p30

## **Ben Jones**

An ex-MU Official and long-time member, Ben is now a freelance music business consultant and project manager for British Underground. p40

# On the frontline

The MU in action, working on behalf of professional musicians.

## **September 24**

### **The MU in profile at the Labour Party Conference**

For the third year in a row the MU had a stand at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton in September. This year the Union focused its lobbying on the ways in which Brexit will impact on musicians, most particularly the issue of free movement.

The MU has been asking MPs and peers to sign up to the MU pledge on free movement, which commits them to support professional musicians and ensure that performers can continue to travel easily across Europe, post-Brexit, for touring and performing. More than 150 MPs, peers and MSPs have now signed up, and the full list can be seen on the MU website. The MU also took a freedom of movement petition to the Labour Party Conference, which secured over 15,000 signatures in the first five days.

In addition to the stand, other MU activity at Conference included General Secretary Horace Trubridge chairing the UK Music fringe event: 'What does Brexit mean for music?' Panellists were APPG on Music co-chair Sharon Hodgson MP, shadow deputy culture secretary Kevin Brennan MP and former No 10 DCMS policy adviser Lord Stewart Wood.

The MU's Head of Government Relations & Public Affairs, Isabelle Gutierrez, also spoke on the panel at a 'Labour Against Brexit' event organised by Mary Honeyball MEP. Other panellists were Alison McGovern MP, Heidi Alexander MP, Rupa Huq MP and Seb Dance MEP.

Horace, Isabelle, and Assistant General Secretary Naomi Pohl also met with several other Labour MPs who have an interest in music, including Stella Creasy, Stephen Doughty, Luciana Berger, Jo Stevens and Thangam Debbonaire. Subjects discussed included organising freelancers and the gig economy, Brexit and its potential consequences for musicians, issues in music education and diversity within the music industry.



**October 13**

**Air Studios finally wins its landmark planning battle**

Globally-renowned recording facility Air Studios has won its two-year battle against planned building work that would have threatened its very survival. Neighbours of the Hampstead studios had put in plans to dig two basements under their property, and Air's owner Paul Woolf believed that the noise and vibration from these works would have seriously affected the studio's ability to operate.

The case was due to be taken to a public planning enquiry in May 2018 in order to make a final decision on the plans, but the family who proposed the plans withdrew their appeal.

“After a two year slog, right has finally triumphed,” said Woolf. “We are absolutely delighted to have won this wasteful planning process. We are forever grateful to the thousands who supported us and to our staff and clients who showed immense resolve in uncertain waters.”

## **December 01**

### **MU political fund and its impact on members**

The MU's political fund is in decline, partly because of the recent general elections, but also due to the changes brought about by the Trade Union Act, which has changed the rules regarding how trade union members contribute to their union's political fund.

The MU's political fund does not all go to the Labour party. Affiliation currently accounts for just under half of the fund, and this is likely to drastically reduce due to the Trade Union Act changes. The rest is spent on other political activity, which is vitally important in protecting musicians' rights and livelihoods.

Lobbying ministers, MPs and MEPs on behalf of our members is something that the MU does every day, and it really does yield results. Currently, the MU is pressuring MPs on the impact that Brexit is likely to have on musicians, and the Union managed to get more than 150 MPs, peers and MSPs to sign up to a pledge on freedom of movement for performers. Previous MU lobbying has achieved success on issues such as the Live Music Act, Term Extension and the Beijing Treaty.

MU members are reminded that they are free to make donations to the Union's political fund should they wish to do so. Please contact your MU Regional Office for more details on how you can donate, or further support our lobbying.

## **October 12**

### **Get more women on festival line-ups**

Much criticism has been levelled at festivals that have neglected to represent female artists on their line-ups. To address this gender imbalance, female members have asked the MU to act upon this issue and build on the Union's existing work.

The first step was a panel discussion, hosted by the MU and chaired by MU Live Official Kelly Wood at the AIF Congress in October. We also want to hear from you about your experiences on this issue. Email [\*\*kelly.wood@theMU.org\*\*](mailto:kelly.wood@theMU.org)

## **October 01**

### **Black History Month celebrates**

### **30th anniversary**

A broad range of musical and cultural events was staged across the UK in October to mark the 30th anniversary of Black History Month. From samba showdowns in Belfast to world music mash-ups

in Birmingham, musical theatre in Liverpool and an examination of the history of music in Brixton, the contribution made by black musicians to the cultural life of this country was honoured across the UK.

As MU member Nadine Wild-Palmer noted in her blog on the MU website: “Black History Month gives us an opportunity to uphold a positive and inclusive celebration of our diverse culture here, in the UK.” For more information on what happened in Black History Month this year, and to see how you can get involved next time around, visit **[blackhistorymonth.org.uk](https://blackhistorymonth.org.uk)**

## **October 23**

### **Scottish musicians back MU campaign**

The Proclaimers, Ricky Ross, Idlewild’s Rod Jones, Pat Kane from Hue And Cry, and Rab Noakes have signed the MU’s petition calling on government to support free movement for musicians working in the EU post-Brexit with minimum administrative burdens.

Craig and Charlie Reid of The Proclaimers said that Brexit “will make working across Europe much more difficult and limit the chances for

bands starting out to do their first gigs on the continent. It also sends out completely the wrong message to musicians from Europe who make a living in Scotland”.

Free movement for musicians is just one of the MU’s five key Brexit issues. Find out more via our Brexit hub, **[theMU.org/Brexit](https://www.themu.org/Brexit)**

## **November 10**

### **Form 696 is finally scrapped**

The divisive Form 696 has been scrapped by the Metropolitan Police. The MU is delighted that the concerns raised by the Union, British Underground, UK Music and other industry bodies as well as many musicians, have been listened to. The form, which required promoters to give full details of everyone taking part, was alleged to be demonising certain genres, and stifling music in the capital.

## **November 14**

### **Measuring Music**

UK Music published its latest Measuring Music report, which highlights the economic contribution of the music industry to the UK’s economy. But the MU was disappointed that

the report did not include reference to the fact that most musicians earn very modest salaries and that the figures are distorted by a small number of very high earners.

# Tackling harassment in the workplace

MU Assistant General Secretary Naomi Pohl discusses the recent cases of sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation in the workplace, and explains what we as members and musicians can do to address the issue and change attitudes.

**Over the last couple of months, women working in arts, culture, media and entertainment have spoken out about sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse in the workplace. Thousands more people have shared their stories across social media using the hashtags #metoo, #himthough and others. There are also men and others who have shared stories of harassment they have suffered, and spoken out in support of women and the need for a culture change.**

The breadth and severity of stories shared is truly shocking, particularly to those of us whose role is



to defend and protect working musicians. It is a wake-up call, and we're working with other representative bodies, such as the Featured Artists Coalition (FAC), to address the issue. Personally, I've been surprised and challenged by the variety of workplaces that present serious problems. Problems we can't ignore. It's not just artists in isolated studios, or being invited to the hotel room of a mogul to sign a deal (which happens and is horrific), but there are also stories from band rooms in theatres, tour buses and music venues – places frequented by the vast majority of MU members.

## **We are here to help**

This is a multi-faceted problem, and when you pull one thread there is a rapid unravelling effect. While the MU has dealt confidentially with cases of harassment, sexism, and discrimination over the years, we have not been confronted by the widespread nature of the problem until now. It's a great shame if musicians have felt they could not approach the Union when incidents occurred in the past, and this is something we aim to change. In fact, tackling harassment is enshrined in the Union's constitution. Rule 1 states that one of the Union's objects is "To oppose actively all forms of



harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination whether on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, colour, class, caring responsibilities, marital status, sexuality, disability, age, or other status or personal characteristic.”

The case studies shared highlight various problems we need to tackle that feed or compound the problem: areas of the industry that remain male-dominated; an extreme imbalance of power in certain relationships (label and emerging artist, for example); the sexualisation of female performers; the failure of many venues to provide adequate changing facilities; everyday sexism; and finally the common-place use of catch-all release forms, non-disclosure agreements, and confidential financial settlements. Some of these issues are shared by other industries and others are music-specific.

## **Changing the culture**

I am reminded of the Creating Without Conflict initiative run by the Federation of Entertainment Unions a few years back. Case studies emerged which made the entertainment unions aware of

a widespread and systemic culture of bullying and abuse of power in TV and film particularly. We ran events and published a report which enabled us to make arguments to those with influence. Workers stood together, employers listened, and the touchpaper for change was lit. We came out of that process with statistics and case studies that enabled us to represent our members more effectively. Problems like this are not resolved overnight, but we see a greater awareness among those in top jobs, and there is a trickle-down effect.

In terms of tackling sexual harassment in the music industry, we need change to trickle up as well as down. Our members can play a part in standing up to inappropriate conduct when they witness it, and reporting incidents that affect them directly, although we acknowledge that this can be challenging. As in any aspect of your working life, the MU is here to offer support and guidance, and all calls are treated in the strictest confidence. If you are an employed or self-employed musician, regardless of which part of the industry you work in, you can talk to us.

There are various wider issues here, as I've highlighted. Dress codes imposed on female workers across the board, such as 'little black dress, high heels', perpetuate the perception that a woman's appearance is somehow fair game and part of the job. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, the photographer involved in Miley Cyrus's naked *Wrecking Ball* video, Terry Richardson, has been called out for alleged abuse, which it appears many in the industry were well aware of. His defence was "they all signed release forms".

## **Unacceptable behaviour**

We've got to stop presenting and treating women in music in a way that we'd never present their male counterparts. Inequality should be challenged wherever it exists, and that is one of the MU's core commitments to its members. Incidentally, I'm not saying that no men have suffered this – they have – but the pornification of women in pop particularly is so much the norm that we barely notice, let alone question it. Those of us who represent performers need to do more to challenge the norms and everyday sexism that reinforce a toxic culture in the industry where it does exist.

I spoke to Lucie Caswell, the FAC's chief executive, about issues featured artists have shared with her. She hosts Horror Story events for FAC members, under Chatham House Rules, so stories can be shared among peers without the fear they will be leaked on social media.

The events don't have a theme and are open to all featured artists, but at a couple of recent meetings there has been a #metoo moment – a performer shares a story of harassment and abuse, and others step forward to say they've been there too.

Lucie has suggested that the MU and FAC take a lead on providing some guidance to inform and empower members: “Being given a contract under high pressure to sign immediately isn't on. It is a power play, and it's in these sorts of high pressure, highly emotionally charged situations that our members need to insist on time out to get advice. We need to provide that ability to pause, to take control and to provide that advice. Time is such an important valve and control in pressured situations. Practical guidance too – don't sign a deal in a studio or personal space, take business discussions into a business environment. Don't

make it emotive or immediate. Business is important but not at any cost, at any time.”

This leads me on to the role our male members can play. Many men in the Union, my colleagues and our members alike, agree that this is an opportunity to make a change, and that it's overdue. No doubt the majority of male performers want to see equal treatment for their female counterparts, and don't want to be party to the problem simply by virtue of witnessing behaviour or overhearing a sexist comment. Most musicians just want to turn up and do their job. I think there is a chance for us to empower anyone working in the industry, freelance or employed, who wants to affect change to take collective action. Band together with colleagues who share your views and deal with your concerns as a group, either through the Union, or by talking directly to the management.

Please don't suffer in silence. The Union is here for all musicians, and protecting you is our primary reason for being. If you have an experience that you wish to share, but you would rather do so anonymously, then please email us at **[safespace@theMU.org](mailto:safespace@theMU.org)**

# Inbox

These pages reflect the diverse range of multi-channel communications between the Union and its members. We welcome your contributions via email, Twitter or letter.

## **YOUR EDITOR**

**Welcome to the winter 2017 issue of *The Musician* with its wide range of news and features relating to the lives of working musicians.**

While we report on our work in the journal, on the MU website, and via emails and social media, members are reminded that many of the cases and issues we handle on behalf of musicians are confidential and cannot be shared.

Be reassured, the Union is working day and night on your behalf to help musicians at every kind of workplace.

**Keith Ames**

TheMusician @theMU.org

## **Scottish support**

Happy to support the MU campaign on free movement for musicians working in the EU.

**Claire Baker MSP** @ClaireBakerMSP

## **Sign up**

Sign The MU's petition for free movement post Brexit.

**M Magazine** @M\_magazinePRS

## **No borders**

Music is made of movements, free movement must continue. Brexit barriers and boundaries silence music. Collaboration is key.

**Susan O'Shea** @SOSheaSNA

## **Anxiety abroad**

Currently living and gigging in Germany.

Anxious about what the future holds.

**James Mackenzie** @\_JamesMackenzie

## **Freedom**

Heading over in November for a Belgian tour and looking to do more in 2018. Freedom of movement is a beautiful thing.

**Mike West** @Mike333West



## **Save my career**

I know it's not about me, but without freedom of movement, my career dies. #WorkingInTheEU

**Tom Parkinson** @tomparkinson

## **First step**

An unsigned Jamie Cullum turned to the The MU for help with his first contract, the rest is history.

**Charlene Hegarty** @ZeroMythUK

## **Share and learn**

It's not just about UK musicians being able to travel, I've benefited immensely from working with colleagues from other European countries.

**Alison Diamond** @ADsaxist

## **Cover Star**

I'm happy to be featured on the cover of the MU magazine.

**Sam Leak's Aquarium** @AquariumSamLeak

## **Promise fulfilled**

When you met MU rep, Barry, in Liverpool in July and mention that you'd love some MU pencils, and then he sends you some!

**Sarah Burrell** @sarahburrell9



## **No pay no play**

Good to see The MU tackling Pay To Play head on.

**Robin Phillips Jazz @RobinPjazz**

## **Loop the loop**

Vocal looping workshop with The MU. My head's a mess but it's really interesting!

**Dave Arcari @davearcari**

## **Spread the word**

Great to have Ben from The MU come down to speak about supporting artists working in the music industry to our students!

**Echo Factory @echofactoryuk**

## **Future members**

Year 10 music students enjoyed an informative talk from the Musicians' Union this morning.

Our thanks to The MU. #inspiring

**StudleyMusic @Studley\_music**

## **Save our teachers**

Teachers left worse off thanks to changes to music education funding, says The MU.

**Making Music UK @MakingMusic\_UK**

## **Michael's joined**

There are so many benefits of becoming a member of The MU. I've joined. You can too.

**Michael Dugher** @MichaelDugher

## **Thanks Mr Wood**

My teacher partly convinced me that being somewhat eccentric can be a valuable asset in the arts (thanks, Mr James Wood!).

**Tristan Hyde** @Tristan\_Hyde

## **New ground**

Well isn't that exciting!!! I'll be the first @WeAreTheMU delegate EVER to attend @ScottishTUC Black Workers Conference!

**Diljeet Bhachu** @DiljeetB\_Flute

## **Irish eye**

In Dublin for a few days' #WorkingintheEU. Hope to be able to do this after Brexit.

**James Topp** @jamestopp

## **Ivory exemption**

Musical instruments are among the exemptions set out in the government's proposals for an ivory ban.

**Classical Music** @ClassicalMusic\_

## **Cheers teacher**

Thank you to every teacher at every conservatoire for your endless devotion to your crafts!

**CUKSN** @CUKSNofficial

## **Cardiff victory**

Good news just in. Planning application for residential development withdrawn.

#savewomanbyst #ClwbIforBach

**Jo Stevens** @JoStevensLabour

## **Copyright clarification**

Stumped when it comes to copyright?

Fear not! The Musicians' Union are here to help clarify your queries.

**The Unsigned Guide** @unsignedguide

## **Pass it on**

As a music teacher I hope I'm teaching kids to value their talents and realise the importance of creativity. Enjoy it!

**Elizabeth** @elizabethislove

## **Sweet inspiration**

Having a good music teacher who inspires you is so important! As a musician and vocal coach I strive to do just that.

**Taylor Notcutt** @TaylorLouiseNot

## **Trinity rocks**

It was lovely to catch up with friends from The MU at the launch of Trinity Rock yesterday.  
#rockandpop2018

**Anna G** @tallgirlwgc

## **State of the nation**

The MU says Brexit “threatens the cultural fabric of our great nation”.

**Richard Corbett** @RCorbettMEP

## **This is really important**

Join the MU and share their petition to ensure musicians can work freely in the EU.  
#WorkingInTheEU

**Phil Manzanera** @philmanzanera

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See page 02 for the contact details of Musicians' Union offices.

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# Collective Bargaining

Getting the best for our members is at the very core of the MU's work. Andrew Stewart examines the strength and positivity of working together.

**Library shelves are filled with tales of creative artists battling against personal demons to produce miraculous works of art. Yet there's another story, all too rarely told, concerning the countless British-based musicians exploited by promoters, undercut by hobbyist performers, or taken advantage of by their management. The MU grew out of an age in which labour flexed its collective muscle to beat the forces of exploitation.**

A glance at today's news reveals that, for all the gains made by organised labour, the fight for fair rates of pay, plus decent employment terms and conditions, belongs as much to the present as to the past, a view brought into stark relief by widening inequality, economic instability and political turmoil.

The need for collective bargaining, for so long the ace card in the hands of trade unions, has arguably never been greater. It remains top priority for the MU, delivered with little fanfare but recognised as essential to the livelihoods of so many of its members. “Collective bargaining agreements are the bedrock of any trade union,” observes Horace Trubridge, General Secretary of the MU. “Unlike many unions, though, the MU has dozens of individual collective bargaining agreements.” These cover orchestras of all sizes, from symphonic and chamber ensembles to theatre bands and jazz orchestras. They protect freelance musicians from a potential race to the bottom in pay rates, and they are increasingly setting employment standards by which promoters can be measured.

“I have always maintained that the MU has a more difficult job than most unions when negotiating on behalf of its members,” Horace notes. “We don’t only have to negotiate around employment rights – the traditional role of a trade union – but we also have to negotiate performer’s rights in media agreements.” The latter belong to an intellectual property (IP) minefield, made more hazardous by the rise of new digital platforms

and online companies eager to exploit musicians' work without paying for it. Employment rights and remuneration have also acquired fresh challenges in recent years, with pay parity between contracted and freelance players, pension liabilities, and concerns about official measures of inflation among them.

### **The cost of living**

The MU is determined to reverse the trend for employers to set aside the Retail Price Index (RPI), once the undisputed measure of inflation, in favour of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or its most recent incarnation, the CPIH. You could say that RPI reflects a certain basket of goods such as mortgages and other consumables that CPI doesn't. So with CPI now running at an average of 0.8% lower than RPI, it's easy to see why employers favour linking pay bargaining to the CPI statistics. "We would always argue that RPI, which is currently running at 3.9%, reflects the true cost of living," observes Dave Webster, the MU's National Organiser, Live Performance. "We want to see our members stay on an even keel with RPI inflation, but know there's pressure on employers to use the CPI or CPIH measure. The trade union movement believes that RPI is the

right measure for working people, and we'll battle as hard as possible for its use.”

Negotiating collective agreements, Dave continues, is ultimately about the art of the possible. “Orchestras and other performing organisations hit by heavy public funding cuts are sometimes more likely to focus on improvements to conditions rather than terms. However, we have been able to secure percentage pay rises on both subsidised and commercial theatre sectors of our regional and touring theatre agreement.”

“Our members need to feel confident that their interests are being looked after,” says Dave. “Many are self-employed, which is where benefits negotiated for them as part of a collective agreement can be so helpful. We can negotiate a benefit with an employer that gives freelance players entitlement to some sick or holiday pay, for instance, which they otherwise wouldn't receive. Most of the employers we have long-standing collective bargaining agreements with recognise how important it is for musicians to feel valued. Of course, they'll look at the balance sheet's bottom

line to see what they're paying out each week. But we're looking at our members' payslips and asking if what they're receiving is fair."

## **Difficult times**

Collective bargaining was simpler in the days when above-inflation orchestral salary increases were routine and media deals were brokered with traditional record companies, broadcasters and the film industry. The reality of almost a decade of public funding cuts, the driving political dogma of austerity, and the proliferation of new media platforms has undermined old negotiating certainties, calling on the MU to broker contract deals that account for tough times while protecting members' rights. "When I started work as a player in the 1970s, orchestral musicians were the best paid they'd ever been," recalls Bill Kerr, the MU's National Organiser, Orchestras. "They've slipped from riches to rags since then. Although today's landscape is hard to recognise from what it was, collective bargaining is alive and well with us, and long may it continue. Without it, you'd have the situation where the employer dictates pay rises and sets terms and conditions."

Musicians are closely involved in collective negotiations, with MU stewards and members of orchestral committees among the participants. Recommended final deals are always put to a ballot of the members they concern. The process, comments Bill, helps maintain a sense of worker solidarity.

“The Union negotiates collective terms and conditions on behalf of musicians with managements, and managements incorporate these into legally enforceable individual employment contracts. It worries me that there are so many good players coming out of the conservatoires who don't know the ropes of the industry in the way that my generation did. They're being hoodwinked by unscrupulous promoters into working for horrendously low rates. Working for rubbish money is almost seen as a postgraduate rite of passage. Collectively agreed deals are a powerful protection against this.”

### **Stronger together**

Jo Laverty, MU London Regional Organiser, notes that there is never a time when there isn't an agreement under negotiation, it is constant.



In London alone the MU manages 14 individual agreements with theatres, orchestras and opera houses, as well as the overarching SOLT (Society of London Theatre) agreement for West End theatres and producers. These can cover salaries, working hours and overtime payments, allowances such as instrument maintenance or well-being, and family friendly leave.

“Collective agreements occupy a huge amount of our work,” observes Jo. “Some will take longer than others. We held the final meeting in October to conclude an agreement that we began negotiating in January 2016. It depends on what’s under discussion and what each side wants. Sometimes the demands might be quite considerable from the players’ side, but more often they’re greater from the management side. Our job is to nudge the sides close to a position where they either achieve what they want, or at least where both sides feel they have achieved something.”

The way of the world, she adds, is for managements to ask musicians to produce more for less, or accept reduced terms and conditions. “It’s the Union’s job to fight against that, to

make sure that our members are protected and properly remunerated.”

Player power, says Jo, counts when it comes to collective bargaining. She cites the case of London’s West End, where around 95% of all theatre musicians belong to the MU. “They’re at the top of their game, and have very definite views about the terms and conditions they work under and the value of their work. That really helps us to negotiate from a position of strength.”

## **Code of conduct**

Good practice developed over decades of collective bargaining has informed the MU’s new code of conduct agreement with the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF). The document, brokered by the Union’s Live Performance Official, Kelly Wood, offers protection to emerging artists, and advice to independent festivals about everything from remuneration and riders, to parking and promotion. It arose, she recalls, as a forward-thinking collaboration between the MU and the AIF.

“This is about introducing musicians at the grassroots level to contracts and agreements,”



Kelly notes. “People are often so pleased to get the gig that they forget about things that can make a big difference to the experience. It’s hard to create a one-size-fits-all approach to festivals, because there are so many variables, but we encourage both sides to think about all aspects well before the performance day itself. We want to ensure that grassroots and emerging artists aren’t exploited. Just because they’re on the bottom of the bill doesn’t mean they should receive poorer levels of comfort and safety than headline acts.”

Bill Kerr identifies two types of orchestral management. One is sympathetic to the financial pressures bearing down on musicians yet lacks the resources necessary to improve matters, the other confronts players with de facto pay cuts and tougher working conditions as take-it-or-leave-it propositions. “The second lot apply the minimum wage attitude to negotiations,” he notes. “We always want to see good co-operative relationships between the Union, musicians, and managements. But collective bargaining means that we can protect our members from exploitation.”

## **We're all in this together**

**Horace Trubridge, General Secretary,  
Musicians' Union**

“Our Officials have done a fantastic job over the last few years negotiating improvements in our collective bargaining agreements against a backdrop of continuing austerity and severe cuts in arts funding. It's important that members who work in the various sectors of our profession are given the chance to get involved in the negotiating process. Very often it's a revelation for them to see how hard it can be and how well our Officials perform. Freedom of association and our collective bargaining agreements are essential tools in ensuring that our self-employed members are protected from those who would seek to exploit them by driving down rates of pay.”

## **Involving our membership**

“We always aim to conclude talks in good time to ballot our members and ask whether they’re prepared to accept a deal in principle,” says Dave Webster, National Organiser, Live Performance.

“If they’re not, then there must be room for compromise from the management. That’s where good industrial relations are so important. The great thing about the way we work is that we get our members involved in the negotiations. They come into the room with our Officials and are prepared to battle it out with management. We’re very proud of their contributions. I think it’s crucial to hear arguments from the perspective of players working under an existing collective agreement. It’s invaluable to have those anecdotal accounts of what things are really like. This collaboration with our members makes a great platform for collective bargaining.”

# Country Roads

In recent years, country music has experienced a surge in popularity in the UK. Andy Fyfe assesses the key people behind this vibrant scene.

**Country in its widest sense can arguably lay claim to the being the fastest-growing genre in the UK. The C2C (Country To Country) Festival in March attracted 80,000 fans over three days and was broadcast live on Radio 2, while 2015 saw The Shires become the first homegrown country act to crack the UK Top 10 Albums Chart in recent years, with Ward Thomas going even better and hitting No 1 a year later.**

A host of festivals, from Gateshead's SummerTyne Americana to End Of The Road, Red Rooster, SCM, Maverick, Truck and many others all gear themselves towards a country or Americana audience, while Black Deer, a new 10,000-30,000 Kent festival aimed solely at the Americana market has just been announced. The scene even has its own industry body, the Americana Music Association UK (AMAUK), which

stages packed showcase gigs around its annual conference and awards ceremony every February.

## **Growing attention**

It's not stopping there any time soon, either. The Sunday evening Radio 2 show *Bob Harris Country* may have ended, but the station will be broadcasting live from C2C again next year, while its pop-up cousin *Radio 2 Country* is also likely to make another appearance in 2018.

Alongside the BBC's two regional Americana shows – Ralph McLean Country on BBC Radio Ulster and Another Country with Ricky Ross on Radio Scotland – a plethora of long-running internet-based shows are also broadcast, among them Del Day's Songs From The Ark on Rocket FM, Resonance FM's Bonanza & Son, and community station Celtic Music Radio, which broadcasts a weekly show with Mike Ritchie. There are even four UK magazines dedicated to the genre: RnR, Maverick, Country Music, and Country Music People.

“After years of being very much an independent scene, major labels such as Decca are now firmly on the country

bandwagon, encouraging new acts to promote themselves as country. After its success with The Shires, the label's new charges, The Wandering Hearts, will be crowned as Bob Harris' Emerging Artists at this year's AMAUK Awards. Clearly, UK country and its earthier sibling Americana are having a moment, and you'd be forgiven to think that everyone involved was busy slapping each other on the back. Amid the positive attitude, however, at its heart the scene is having something of an identity crisis.

The problem centres around the very definition of country. In the US, country seems an obvious proposition: big hat, beer, trucks, and either losing or getting the girl (or boy). Even there, though, the staunch ramparts of the Country Music Association are being attacked by the likes of Chris Stapleton, Jason Isbell and Sturgill Simpson, all traditional sounding country artists, but with a far more leftfield vision and willingness to sing about drugs, politics, peace, love and understanding.

But what is Americana? Possibly the hardest of all musical genres to pin down, it's been

described by Jed Hilly, head of the US Americana Music Association, as music where “you can taste the dirt through your ears”. It’s music that takes bluegrass, soul, country, blues, folk, and singer-songwriters and mixes it in a rock blender, more concerned with telling stories than making hit records.

### **National identity**

For years, the very notion of British-derived country music was viewed with deep suspicions about authenticity. Call it Americana, however, and until recently you could add outright derision to the scorn heaped upon anyone daring to use the term. So what’s changed to make a major like Decca start using the term as a marketing badge of authenticity for UK acts? “A simple answer,” says Danny Wilson, leader of Danny And The Champions Of The World, leading lights of UK Americana, “is the formation of the AMAUK. It’s not the only answer, but it’s definitely a major part. When you have passionate people like that working specifically for a genre people are going to notice.”

For Ben Earle of The Shires, added to that is



a shift in public perception of country music, tapping into unlikely mainstream cultures. “There’s a huge appetite for real, honest music in the UK, where the artist is trying to say something meaningful through their lyrics,” Earle says. “Ed Sheeran is a perfect example. A lot of his lyrics are very conversational, as are most country songs. I think it’s no coincidence that Ed and country are having a big moment right now.”

## **Strictly roots**

But within country-tinged music there is a battle between the pop end of the spectrum and the more rootsy element. Sara Silver, head of European operations for Nashville indie label Thirty Tigers, sees the lines drawn not so much by the music as events. “On one hand you have C2C and the pop end of country, on the other you have Maverick Festival, which is very much in the Americana world,” she says. “From the outside, the public might tag them all as country, but inside everyone is tagging each other with little boxes.”

The audience that has gradually grown and flourished at a grassroots level around



Americana began with The Rockingbirds back in the early 90s. Danny Wilson's band and a host of others – The Redlands Palomino Company, Case Hardin, The Dreaming Spires from Oxford, Climbing Trees from Wales, solo acts such as Danni Nicholls from Bedford, Edinburgh's Dean Owens, and Malojian from Belfast – all readily accept a debt owed to The Rockingbirds, and their leader Alan Tyler's fortnightly club Come Down And Meet The Folks. Over 20 years The Folks has acted as a scene clubhouse, inspiring others such as What's Cookin' in Leytonstone and a host of small venues around the country.

The groundswell of Americana culminated in AMAUK holding its first annual conference at the 2015 Maverick Festival. Since then the umbrella organisation for artists, managers, promoters, agents, PRs, media and labels has hosted two annual Awards ceremonies and successfully lobbied for the launch of the UK Americana Chart.

### **The song and the truth**

Stevie Freeman, the chair of AMAUK and owner of specialist roots record shop Union

Music in East Sussex, sees the organisation's role as enabler rather than gatekeeper. "This genre is based, at a grassroots level, on the song and the truth," Freeman explains. "It's hard to combine that with commercial success, but we can't do what we're doing without embracing the business. Some were confused that at last year's Awards Van Morrison won Best Americana Album. But that meant lots of people from the press and in the industry looked up at what we were doing, and on stage during the awards we had people such as Danni Nicholls performing to Jools Holland and Van Morrison and Richard Thompson in the audience."

## **Helping hands**

Freeman also points to the association working with festivals around the UK to provide a stage that their members could apply to perform on. "You're talking about artists without booking agents or even managers, and suddenly a band from Scotland can come down to play a festival in the south of England. There's no way they could do that without the work we're doing."

## **Across the Atlantic**

Perhaps the most far-reaching work AMAUK puts in is its annual pilgrimage to Nashville for the Americana Music Awards week each September, showcasing British talent in the country music capital. One of the biggest beneficiaries of their patronage has been Yola Carter. For the Bristol-based singer who Rolling Stone once named as their highlight of the week, and who won the AMAUK's inaugural UK Artist Of The Year in 2016, their support is as much about community as it is financial or showcase benefits.

“I’ve always been a bit of a lone wolf,” Carter says, “but on an organisational level, arriving in Nashville with a gang, there’s people you can talk to if something goes wrong. Being of colour is a whole different ball game again. That’s just what it’s like being of colour in the Western world anyway, but being a Brit, and being a woman, and being a British woman of colour singing country, you’re pretty much guaranteed to be an outsider in what is already an outsider genre.”

But can a UK band make a living and a career out of such grassroots music? It goes back to the question of identity and whether you accept the likes of Mumford & Sons or even The Shires as part of the wider family. But there is a strata of musicians and labels who manage to keep their heads above water. For Tom Bridgewater, owner of Loose Records, the fact that his label celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2018 is testament enough that there is an independent living to be made. “As a label we haven’t got banjo-shaped swimming pools in our gardens,” he jokes. “Until we have a breakthrough like Mumfords we’re only ever going to make a modest living, but I think that’s something to be proud of in the music industry.”

## **Making it our own**

Danny Wilson believes the UK is coming into its own as an authentic source for country-based roots music, even though he believes it’s always been here. “If you want to go to Nashville then go,” he says. But don’t confuse it with authenticity. There’s nothing in the water at Muscle Shoals that makes the music great. There’s just as much greatness inherent

within Reservoir Studios in London. I think we need to pump our chests out a little and stop thinking of ourselves as the poor cousins.” He also points to the growing confidence of domestic songwriters to engage with their own world rather than an imagined American. “Mick and Keith listening to all those old blues records thought: ‘Let’s make it about our lives, about London’,” he says. “We’ve got our own stuff going on, and we have to make it about our world or it just doesn’t ring true. There is a romance about driving a Transit from Manchester to Birmingham and I think the best UK Americana reflects that. It also makes ours sound quite different to the US. Quirkier, a little bit grittier and idiosyncratic, and I think the Americans can appreciate that too.”

“Country in the UK has evolved so much in the last five years,” Ben Earle notes. “The songs are generally so much more relatable now for a UK audience, especially lyrically. It’s not all just cowboys, whisky and Stetsons. What’s most exciting though is that it really feels like we’re all just at the start of something.”

## **AMAUK Awards**

The 2018 Americana Music Association UK Award nominations were announced in London on 7 November. The UK-based nominees include...

### **UK Album of the Year**

Danny & The Champions of The World:

*Brilliant Light*

Robert Vincent:

*I'll Make The Most Of My Sins*

William The Conqueror:

*Proud Disturber Of The Peace*

Emily Barker: *Sweet Kind Of Blue*

### **UK Song of the Year**

Police Dog Hogan: *Devon Brigade*

Worry Dolls: *Endless Road*

Yola Carter: *Home*

Foy Vance: *Moonshine*

### **UK Artist of the Year**

Danni Nicholls

Emily Barker

Laura Marling

Danny & The Champions of The World

## **Danny's Champions**

Danny Wilson picks his Top UK  
Americana promoters.

### **Jumpin Hot Club, Newcastle & Gateshead:**

Graham Anderson  
info@jumpinhot.com

### **Cosmic American Music, Nottingham:**

James Windsor  
james@cosmicamerican.com

### **Brighthelmstone Promotions, Brighton:**

James Walker  
brighthelmstonepromotions.co.uk

### **Empty Room Promotions, Oxford:**

Mike Trotman  
empty-rooms.com

### **SCM Promotions, Winchester:**

Oliver Gray  
oliver@revilolang.com

**Fallen Angels Promotions, Glasgow:**

Kevin Morris

info@fallenangelsclub.com

**What's Cookin', London:**

Stephen Ferguson

whatscookin.co.uk

**HeeHaw Sessions, Leeds:**

Tre Sutherland

promotions@heehawsessions.com



# Get Some Therapy?

Drummer, teacher, and software developer – Neil Cooper explains how lessons learned in early years have helped forge a fruitful career.  
**Profile by Roy Delaney**

**Although he's best known these days for providing the driving beats behind the Irish alt metal band Therapy?, Neil Cooper has had a long and busy life in music. From being signed to a major label in his teens with his first band The Beyond to the indie hip of Cable, his time teaching the drums and working sessions, to more recently devising his own music tutor's management software, he certainly likes to keep things varied. But when it comes down to it Neil just loves to play music. So how did it all get started for him?**

“I just fell into it. My older brother played the bass, and my parents were regular concert goers, so there was music all around. Then I started taking drumming lessons at around 11 years old, and my older brother started saying: ‘Hey, listen to this’, and I was taking it all in and soaking it all up. My

drum tutor was very much into the rudiments. It was all jazz and reading and very much regimented. I'd go in wanting to play like the Dead Kennedys, Slayer, Metallica, and even The Police, but he insisted that I learn the fundamentals. But I'm glad that he did. He was a bit of a ballbreaker, and I just wanted to play thrash metal. But he made me play the rudiments, which is why I think I'm still doing this today."

## **Above and beyond**

Those lessons quickly paid off, as his first band, Derby-based hard rockers The Beyond, got signed by EMI when he was just seventeen.

"I had a few friends at school who all had a passion to make music who were listening to the same bands as me," Neil recalls. "As much as I love Derby, there wasn't much happening back then, so it was an escape. And we knew we wanted to do something different, a more left-of-centre rock. I was trying to add more kind of techno drum beats. I'd get all these white labels in and drum along to them, using them as a metronome, and listening to bands like Public Enemy and lots of hip-hop. And those techno beats worked. EMI quickly picked up on it,

and signed us up.”

But it turns out that they weren't your typical gang of wide-eyed teenagers just happy to have a deal. “Oh we were pains in the butt. We argued about everything because we cared about what we did. We were so passionate, and maybe a bit precious too. Our management understood us, and so did our A&R man, but we were still cautious. We didn't want EMI to make the wrong decision and make us look daft. But it was all quite amicable and we had a good relationship. It all ran aground though when the label had a management clearout, and the new people could see that we weren't selling as well as maybe some other bands. But we had a great time, toured America. We all got back in contact to celebrate our 25th anniversary, and I got to thinking, ‘I was just seventeen. How did my parents let me do all that?’”

## **The next steps**

After The Beyond disbanded he quickly moved on to fill the drum stool for the highly acclaimed indie rock band Cable. “They were a bunch of guys from Derby who played stuff that I liked. And it was so different to what I'd done before. I had a much more stripped down drumming approach

and played with a much smaller kit. As a drummer, if you're any good you'll get picked up by bands, and I was incredibly lucky to go from deal to deal. And listening back to that band it still makes me smile. I'm very proud of those recordings – it was a bit of a reset and start again thing.

I've always been passionate about playing and being in a band. I did a little bit of session work around then. It's good that people come to you and know that you're a safe pair of hands. But it wasn't really for me. You walk in, get paid then walk out, but it's not just about the cash for me. It just doesn't fit with what I want to do. I want to be part of a team effort. But I admire people who can play country and western one day then metal the next. It's an art."

Around that time Neil also began to give drumming lessons. "A local drum shop asked me if I wanted to take some lessons. I'd been doing it for a couple of years when I realised that there was nothing to say that I could actually do it. So I studied for a certificate with the Royal School of Music. I give one-to-one tuition – part-time here and there – and I love it. I really enjoy seeing a pupil go from being a complete beginner to

making their first CD. And it's not just technical. It builds confidence. I encourage them to be creative and steal ideas from everywhere – but to make them their own. I try to make it more rounded and not just about making the grades.”

However, the gig with Therapy? came by complete chance, and his introduction into the band wasn't as painless as it could have been. “It was back in 2002. I bumped into Andy (Cairns, Therapy?'s singer and guitarist) at a gig. We knew each other because they played their first English shows supporting The Beyond. He said to me that they were looking for a new drummer, and did I fancy it? Simple as that! Their original drummer Fyfe Ewing had a similar style to me, so we were sat in the same ballpark, and I thought: ‘Why not!’”

“So they had a festival in Portugal lined up, and they asked me if I wanted do a couple of rehearsals with them and see how we got on. We were due to have two days of rehearsals before we flew out. Then all of a sudden it became one day, then half. Then it ended up as a single run through of the sixteen songs. This was a headline set, and I was sat there with bits of paper all around me. I'm laughing now, but afterwards

I said to them “Are you mental? I could have completely bottled it!”

“After that me and Andy got together to jam songs he was working on for the band’s new album – and now this coming album will be my seventh with them. Eight if you count our live album. I think it all works because we’re not constantly in each others’ pockets. I live in Derby, Andy’s somewhere in Cambridge and Michael (McKeegan, the bassist) still lives back in Belfast. It’s got a natural cycle and it feels good. I think that’s one of the reasons we don’t all tear our hair out.”

So with all these different irons in the musical fire, how would Neil describe himself? What is his actual profession? “Ha! My wife says: ‘You’ve got so many jobs!’. But I’m a professional musician, and Therapy? is my main job. You get to a point where you know what you’re good at and have to focus, and have to want to do a specific thing. I mean, Therapy? are in a great position. We earn a good living out of the band. But how new bands start these days I have no idea. The world is awash with so much stuff I don’t know how they would get started. I mean, these days you don’t



get big by releasing records. It's all about your Instagram and YouTube hits. Don't get me wrong, I'm not an old fogey about all this. It's brilliant but different to how we used to do it, and I'm aware that the changes are massive."

## **The good life**

"When I look back at my career, when I'm on stage in some place like Serbia or Romania, I look back and none of this would have been possible without my drumming lessons when I was eleven. But it's good to be busy. I like being snowed under and freaking out. It works."

The new Therapy? album is due out early next year, and the band will be touring the UK with The Stranglers in March. Neil's software, Music Tutor's Hero, is due to be released before the end of 2017. For more information about the band, visit **[therapyquestionmark.co.uk](http://therapyquestionmark.co.uk)**

## **The Musicians' Union And Me**

“I’ve been a member since about 1990. My drum tutor and my brother both had the yellow stickers everywhere, and I remember just knowing that this must be a good thing. I grew up in Derby so I didn’t really know what to do, and the MU is there for the bands coming through. It’s reassuring to have someone who knows what they are talking about when you’re starting out. And the teaching side is great. It’s so useful having a friendly ear to ask about contracts and fees when you’re starting out. I’ve been down to the House of Commons with them to lobby Parliament. I think it’s important to have a voice. Brexit affects me, and many other musicians, massively, and a good strong voice is needed to make sure that we are heard.”



## **Innovative Enterprise**

Neil is about to launch a new management software platform for independent music teachers, called Music Tutor's Hero. The idea came to him when he was looking for a way to organise his teaching sessions more effectively.

“I was teaching in schools, music shops, and private homes, and while some of the schools had an intranet where I could put things up for the pupils, with others I was relying on writing out notes for myself and my students, and then they'd sometimes forget them. So I wanted something where I could gather everything into the one place, upload notes and a media library for the pupils to work on. That way they don't need to bring books and a heavy kitbag – they just turn up with their sticks and everything else is on their phone.

It's Cloud-based, and it's secure. The tutor can create as many venues and pupil

profiles as they like and build up their timetable, and when the pupil logs in at their end, only they can see it.

This software also has all the pupil's historic lessons in a sidebar, allows you to drag and drop lesson elements into a particular profile, and creates a professional invoice for you as well – all in one central place. And the kids get it. It really works for everyone – me, the students and the parents.”

For more information, go to  
**[musictutorshero.co.uk](http://musictutorshero.co.uk)**

# Levelling the Field

As the MU celebrates Disability History Month, *The Musician* reports on new initiatives that are driving inclusivity for disabled musicians.

**Feature by Katie Nicholls**

**The MU celebrates Disability History Month between 22 November and 22 December with a series of blogs from disabled members, highlighting the ongoing struggle for equality. “We are celebrating the positives in this journey,” says Florence Morris, MU Education and Equalities Officer, “as well as what needs to be changed”.**

The outlook for disabled musicians in 2018 sees some of the projects initiated in 2017 bear fruit. The National Open Youth Orchestra – the world’s first disabled-led youth orchestra – will open for applications in January 2018, ready for launch in autumn 2018. Bristol’s Colston Hall is preparing for the opening of the National Centre For Inclusive Excellence in September 2018, and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s (BSO) Arts Council-funded Change Makers project will see

its first slew of performances during next year. The MU is looking forward to collaborating with a variety of partners in the FLOW collective during 2018 – a project aimed at linking young musicians with opportunities in the music industry.

While it's heartening to see so many projects focusing and supporting the work of disabled musicians, it's nevertheless a chilly reminder that disabled musicians still only make up 4% of National Portfolio Organisations against a population of 19%, illustrating that there is a long journey ahead if disabled musicians are to enjoy parity with their non-disabled peers.

## **Breaking the mould**

A conductor who is pioneering a change in attitude and challenging expectations is James Rose. In June, James was chosen to train as a conductor with the BSO as part of the Change Makers project, and he has been charged with selecting both non-disabled and disabled musicians to work in a new ensemble to perform pieces around the country.

James worked in filmmaking while harbouring a secret desire to conduct. A performance at

the London 2012 Olympic ceremony fired his ambition, which was furthered still when Sian Edwards, head of conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, invited him to observe classes on the conducting programme. He subsequently hosted a conducting development week at the Royal Academy in 2016. The difference with James is that, due to his cerebral palsy, he is unable to hold a baton, and he conducts using a specially-designed head baton. "I have limited fine motor skills and I can't hold flowers," says James, "and I am a wheelchair user so I can't jive! But I don't consider myself disabled and I spend most of my time fighting people's fears."

His appointment with the BSO has been a privilege, says James. "As I sink my teeth into my role at the BSO, the more I feel I have landed on my feet, supported by a welcoming organisation of passionate people". James has encountered prejudice many times during his career, the most pervasive of which is the meagre expectations society holds towards what disabled people can offer or achieve. Since his school days James says the bar has been set low. "I attended three special schools before moving to mainstream

secondary in 1997, aged 12. Music lessons at my last special school featured watching an animation of Prokofiev's *Peter And The Wolf*, presenting rhythms to duplicate on drum machines. I attempted to push the boundaries once by marking a rhythm with my wheelchair's horn, owning it, and temporarily unveiling my musical side. This aggravated the teacher, threatening to throw me out of the classroom, signalling the end of my initial attempt at being openly musical, resigned to the idea that my desire was weird!"

As an adult James has often encountered resistance to his ambition because, he says, "my appearance often led people to assume that I was naive, driven by delusions, and many people did not take my musical conducting aspiration seriously" but he says it comes less from "organisations and institutions being resistant to me achieving my potential. It is more about them not knowing how to engage with disabled artists".

### **Passing the buck**

While music hubs, conservatoires and NPOs may express a desire to be fully inclusive, ensuring

they take the measures required so inclusivity becomes a reality for disabled musicians is clearly a long way off. It's an issue that was raised at a recent symposium entitled, Breaking The Glass Ceiling, held at Bristol's Colston Hall. Siggie Patchitt, education manager at the venue, organised the conference: "We had a panel conversation with disabled artists and an industry panel made up of representatives from the BBC, MU, BSO and The Barbican. They responded to the stories that were being told by the artists. There was a little bit of a confessional and actually they all told similar stories, saying: 'My section of the industry has historically been very poor, but we've started to notice this, that and the other'.

"Everybody agreed that if anything is going to change we all have to admit that the current system is too inflexible, too inaccessible, and is actually perpetuating injustice. I think that's such a significant point because all too often we say we have to do more, but what we don't do is say that what we're doing now is damaging people. Traditionally, orchestras will point the finger at conservatoires and say: 'There's not enough black or disabled musicians coming through'.



The conservatoires will point at the music services and say the same, and then point the finger at the schools. As soon as you acknowledge that what we're doing now isn't working you give yourself license to change without being precious about what's in place."

Projects such as Change Makers offer hope for disabled musicians trying to break through into orchestras. The scheme will see the Arts Council invest £2.57m to support 20 National Portfolio Organisations and Major Partner Museums to host training placements for disabled and black minority ethnic leaders. Notably, only one of the 20 awards has gone to a disabled artist (James). "This achievement clearly demonstrates the Orchestra's ongoing mission to be accessible to as many people as possible and transform lives through music," say the BSO.

While it's disappointing that James's appointment remains the sole award to a disabled artist, it is progress nonetheless, and for James it is, he says: "a global first. With projects like the National Open Youth Orchestra launching in September 2018, there is a real drive to achieve full inclusion within the orchestral arena."



## **Show us the cash**

If attitudes, accessibility and approach are starting to change, to have any serious bite this paradigm shift needs to be backed up by financial support from the government so that disabled musicians can make the leap from benefits to paid employment. It will ring a familiar bell for musicians with disabilities to hear that James has struggled to break the benefits loop: “Due to the cuts in Access to Work [the government scheme set up to help people who have disabilities into employment] and the way in which the benefit system operates, I have been unable to seek employment,” says James “and I have therefore reluctantly been on benefits since graduating from university with a few exceptions”. Siggy concurs: “I think one of the biggest issues that we’ve identified is to become financially independent. Most of the people who are disabled are on benefits. Making that transition off benefits is not something that’s currently being set up.

It’s a very tricky landscape to navigate. Access to Work doesn’t get much thumbs up when it’s mentioned to people who are disabled. Over the last year we’ve encouraged young musicians to

take on internships, but they've struggled for that very reason. It's too big a risk for them to take."

## **Inclusion or integration?**

It is undoubtedly the industry's problem that disabled musicians are unable to operate on the same playing field as their non-disabled colleagues. Ticking the inclusion box is not enough if we are to look forward to genuine change.

"People get inclusion confused with integration," says Siggy. "They think putting a disabled person into an orchestra is inclusion, but it's not because that's not authentic. What you have to do is change the orchestra so that whoever comes, whether they're in a wheelchair or they play a different instrument it's inclusive. There should be no such thing as a disabled musician."

For James, the opportunity offered by the BSO means that music acts as the great leveller: "The first time the ensemble comes together and performs will be a special moment to which I'm looking forward. This project is about reminding people that no matter how many differences we have between each other, we are all human. A fact that will guide the continuation of my musical journey to break even more expectations."

## **Clarion Call**

If bands, ensembles, and orchestras are to become fully inclusive then they need to be open to the introduction of new technology and instruments.

“There are 4,000 years between the invention of the harp and the saxophone, yet they’re both in the symphony orchestra,” says Siggy Patchitt, education manager at the Colston Hall in Bristol.

“Around 40 years after the saxophone was invented came the synthesizer and yet there’s no place for it in an orchestra. When did we decide we were going to stop evolving?”

James Rose hopes to introduce new instruments into his ensemble, including the Clarion. Designed by Barry Farrimond, it’s an accessible musical instrument that can be played with any part of the body.

## **Go with the FLOW**

A big concern for those working towards diversity in the industry is the lack of practical experience disabled musicians are offered, and the obstacles this later creates in their career development. The FLOW Collective is a project led by the Bristol Music Trust and structured around the Stanford model of collective impact, and Hart's ladder of participation.

Siggy Patchitt explains: "The Collective will be engaging and supporting a national cohort of committed, passionate, and driven 16-25-year-olds, who will act as agents of change, working directly with music industry and FE/HE partners to design accessible opportunities for themselves and those that follow. This cohort will be called the FLOW Collective. Education, industry, and FE/HE partners will consult with them and begin to shape industry opportunities. It will be supported to develop their artistic and professional

skills individually and as a national collective, and will, in turn, directly support the young musicians coming after them.”

# Pantomime Pros

The centuries-old pantomime provides dependable annual income for MU members across the UK, as well as its own distinct set of skills, benefits and challenges.

**Report by Neil Crossley**

**Few forms of entertainment are quite as synonymous with Christmas as pantomimes. Despite the welter of multimedia attractions on offer today, panto still occupies a special place in the hearts of British audiences. And for the musicians who work in them, it offers a significant and dependable source of income.**

“Pantomimes can be a good focal point for musicians’ earnings throughout the year,” says Stephen Brown, MU Regional Organiser for the Midlands. “It’s a good, regular income stream for members and it helps them to plan financially in their diaries.”

Stephen points out that all of the major cities in the Midlands region will have pantos on over the festive season. Most MU members in the

region, he adds, will be combining panto work with education work, and other revenue streams such as running music workshops. “So they’ll be doing three or four things in general to try and tie it all together,” he says.

### **Panto percussionist**

Such is the case for Tim Farmer, a percussionist who has worked in pantomimes for 22 years, landing his first one during his first year at music college in Birmingham. Tim’s other roles include peripatetic teacher, first-call extra with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and principal timpanist with the Orchestra Of The Swan chamber group. “Pantomime is a big chunk, financially, of my year.” he says. “The way I tend to look at panto is that it pays my tax bill at the end of January. That’s kind of my failsafe.”

Most pantos run from the beginning or middle of December to mid-January, offering between four to six weeks work. This year, Tim is working for six weeks in *Jack And The Beanstalk* at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton. He and the band will do twelve shows a week – two shows a day for six days, with one day off. “I do enjoy it,” he says. “When you get a good audience in – and you



hear the noise from that audience – the show really comes to life. That’s great.”

It’s a point echoed by trombonist and MU member Chris Cole, who has worked in 25 pantos since his first in Eastbourne in 1989. “It is an enjoyable place to work,” says Chris. “Audiences are enjoying themselves, scripts are funny and despite playing two shows every day for the whole run, there is usually a good camaraderie amongst band members. There is also often interaction between the stage and the pit, meaning that the musicians feel involved in the show, not something that happens very much in musicals for the rest of the year.”

## **Searching for cues**

This interaction between the musicians and the cast is key. While bands have undoubtedly been reduced in size in the last decade – from as many as 12 musicians to sometimes just two – live musicians continue to be in demand at panto season, due in part to the need for musical spontaneity. Much of Tim Farmer’s role involves keeping his eyes on the performers for cues. “I can’t imagine how you’d do a panto without the flexibility of live musicians, in terms



of the spontaneity required” he says. “I will spend the time when we’re not playing musical numbers watching for when someone gets hit over the head with a frying pan and all those comedic moments. So you’re talking cymbals, cowbells, almost anything. Sometimes they’ll want a specific sound effect, triggered from an electronic percussion module.”

The issue of musicians being replaced by full-on backing tracks is an ongoing concern, although the MU is taking whatever action is necessary to counter this. In December 2015, for example, the MU demonstrated outside the Arena Birmingham over the lack of live music in a production of *Cinderella*, which was dubbed ‘the worlds’ biggest panto’ by its producers. “We’ve also had a few issues with things not being billed as pantos that for all intents and purposes are a panto,” says Stephen Brown. “But one thing that they don’t put in is a live band. So then they’ll rename them. So it’s no longer a panto it’s a ‘seasonal spectacular’.”

### **A broader view**

In each instance, the MU has reacted by staging protests outside these productions, informing

the audience that the shows feature no live music, and at the same time seeking to negotiate with the producers to protect the interests of MU members. While such endeavours will continue, the MU is planning a new initiative in the future to raise awareness, via the media, of the intrinsic relationship between live music and pantomimes. “We are looking at that in the wider context of live music and musical theatre in general,” says Dave Webster, MU National Organiser, Live Performance, “focusing on panto to explore this further and how we might have an effective campaign. Ultimately, I think the audience member would always expect to see and hear live music when attending a musical theatre production and panto is part of that.”

## **Special effects**

In recent years, pantomimes have become increasingly spectacular, utilising a plethora of special effects and pyrotechnics. Dave Webster highlights the importance of protecting all MU members who work in orchestra pits against technical special effects such as pyrotechnics. It's an issue that Chris Cole is all too familiar with: “The special effects and pyrotechnics are great for audiences, but it has often led to

musicians feeling anxious about injury to person or equipment. We tend to be underneath any pyrotechnics and get fall-out from sparks. As a safety precaution the producers now tend to put us under the stage rather than in the open pit. This is great with respect to safety and shows a fantastic approach to employee welfare. However, it is a shame that the desire for visual spectacle comes at the expense of bands being seen.”

### **Into the future**

Chris Cole and Tim Farmer both highlight the importance of encouraging the next generation of pantomime audiences. They believe that panto offers an ideal opportunity to foster the importance of live music among the younger generation.

“This is often the first time that kids to go into a theatre,” says Tim. “If you can establish the norm being that there’s live music and there’s people sat in a pit playing instruments, if that becomes part of their experience then they may expect it when they go and see a pantomime or musical in the future.”

## **Contracts are key**

Dave Webster says that MU members working in pantomimes must ensure they use contracts, and that these contracts are upheld. “Members should be ensuring that rates tie in with our UK Theatre agreement, and therefore the rates are regulated by the Union, and minimum rates are the same for panto as they would be for a musical,” he says. “What is important is that there are many panto producers out there, and some who are not UK Theatre members may be offering lesser terms than the agreed MU minimums. Members should insist on contracts, and if at all concerned, contact the MU for advice.”

Jo Laverty, MU London Regional Organiser, echoes Dave’s comments: “On pantos produced by either SOLT or UK Theatres members, the musicians are protected by the terms of our agreements (although each individual musician should still have a contract). However we’ve had problems

in the past with companies trying to mount a Christmas production without enough expertise or cash behind it to ensure the production's success. Once they fold, we've found members don't have a contract and it can even be unclear which legal entity is responsible for payment of fees for cancellation for work already done. If the member, or failing that the Union, is unable to recover those fees for members, it's a bad time of year to be left high and dry in terms of work."

REGIONAL FOCUS

# Belfast

Feature by Lee Henry

**The Belfast scene has always been lively, but now it's breaking out into the mainstream.**

Listed as the number one city to visit in 2018 by Lonely Planet, Belfast has a lot to offer the intrepid music lover. The Northern Irish capital boasts a wealth of atmospheric live music venues, eclectic festivals, state-of-the-art centres dedicated to skills development and collaboration, and a range of established and emerging acts to follow. For a city with a population of just 670,000 people, Belfast has always punched above its weight when it comes to making melodies.

In years gone by, bombs and bullets were the buzzwords most closely associated with the city. During the height of the Troubles, Belfast city centre was encircled by a foreboding Ring of Steel, and bomb scares routinely emptied buildings of workers and those few tourists brave enough to walk the streets. But things have

changed. In 2017, Belfast is recognised as one of the safest cities in the UK.

## **Up and coming**

Since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, Northern Ireland has remained largely peaceful. As a result, Belfast is thriving, with chic hotels, tech companies and banks using the Northern Ireland Science Park as their European base, and a proactive community of indigenous entrepreneurs running welcoming cafes, bars, restaurants, boutiques and events. Belfast City Council has invested in existing infrastructure, renovating the iconic Ulster Hall, home to the Ulster Orchestra – the only full-time professional orchestra in Northern Ireland. Cultural funding organisations such as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland Screen continue to support local artists and help to make the city a viable option in which to create new music, movies and more.

## **Come and play**

Belfast City Airport welcomes record numbers of visitors each year, and while the TV series *Game Of Thrones* has played a big part in that (much of the show's interior scenes are filmed in Titanic



Studios, and exteriors in nearby villages now holiday meccas for camera-happy travelling fans of the show), Belfast's rich musical heritage is also worth exploring.

Going back to the 1950s, south Belfast-born Ruby Murray won the hearts of millions around the world with her softly-sung post-war hits including *Evermore* and *Real Love*, while the subsequent Swinging 60s period produced arguably Belfast's greatest living musical export: the incomparable Van Morrison, who burst onto the scene singing *Gloria* with Them in 1965 and went on to produce classic, genre-defying solo albums like *Astral Weeks*.

Fans from all over the world make the journey to Belfast often to see for themselves the people and places immortalised in Morrison's canon, such as the tree-lined Cyprus Avenue in his native east Belfast. Aficionados rank Van the Man right up there with the likes of Bob Dylan, Neil Young and The Beatles.

### **Good vibrations**

Morrison's lyrics have always focused on the more esoteric aspects of Belfast living,



but punk bands active during the Troubles were much more political. Stiff Little Fingers, Rudi, and The Outcasts had more in common with The Clash than anything on the Motown roster, and all signed to punk godfather Terri Hooley's egalitarian Good Vibrations label during the 1970s.

With the Troubles raging around them, Hooley and his coterie of anti-establishment artists gave local students something to mosh to of an evening, although it was the more palatable Derry band, The Undertones, that awarded Good Vibrations its finest hour when legendary BBC Radio 1 DJ John Peel played their single *Teenage Kicks* no less than three times in a row. He later described it as his favourite song of all time.

Recent decades have proven similarly productive, with the likes of Therapy?, Ash and Snow Patrol conquering the charts, while the current crop of musical millennials include Mercury Prize-nominated songstress Soak.

DJ turned Hollywood movie composer David Holmes, meanwhile, recently produced Noel Gallagher's latest solo album in Belfast, the lead single of which (*Holy Mountain*) featured

a nifty tin whistle riff, something that fans of traditional Irish music and marching bands will no doubt have appreciated. You can take the musician out of Belfast...

**Belfast,  
County Antrim, Northern Ireland**

Population: 483,418

**Famous Belfast people and residents:**

George Best

Christine Bleakley

Kenneth Brannagh

Jake Burns

James Galway

Alex Higgins

CS Lewis

Katie Melua

Gary Moore

Van Morrison

Ruby Murray

Mary Peters

## **MU Scotland & Northern Ireland Office**

Regional Organiser:

Caroline Sewell

333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6NG

0141 341 2960

[glasgow@theMU.org](mailto:glasgow@theMU.org)

## **VENUES**

### **SSE ARENA**

Formerly the Odyssey Arena, the SSE is located within the Odyssey Complex and opened in 2000. It's the biggie – when Beyoncé, Disney On Ice and The Who come to town, they rock up here. A decent 11,000 capacity makes it the largest live music venue in Belfast.

**[ssearenabelfast.com](http://ssearenabelfast.com)**

## **WATERFRONT HALL**

Where the SSE is big and brash, the Waterfront Hall is all refined sophistication. The 2,250 capacity auditorium, designed by local architects Robinson McIlwaine, boasts beautiful acoustics so is as suited to classical concerts as it is to pared down sets and stomping rock gigs.

**[waterfront.co.uk](http://waterfront.co.uk)**

## **ULSTER HALL**

The oldest of the large scale live music venues in Belfast (it seats 1,000), this beautiful venue has played host to everyone from author Charles Dickens to Johnny Cash. It is the Holy Grail for local bands. When you've played the Ulster Hall, you've made it.

**[ulsterhall.co.uk](http://ulsterhall.co.uk)**

## **THE LIMELIGHT**

A firm favourite among Belfast's student population, The Limelight caters for the emerging acts and big bands on the wane. Liam Gallagher hedged his bets by booking

it to promote his debut solo album but was duly upgraded to the SSE.

**[limelightbelfast.com](http://limelightbelfast.com)**

## **MENAGERIE**

Located deep in the heart of the Holylands, a residential area on the south side, the Menagerie is a 'blink and you miss it' kind of venue. Redbrick. Graffiti. No frills. Inside, the former paint store offers a fairly tight space in which to enjoy sweaty, left field musical experiences.

**[menageriebar.com](http://menageriebar.com)**

## **THE BLACK BOX**

From a cultural point of view, Belfast's Cathedral Quarter is the beating heart of the city. The Black Box on Hill Street, a Grade II listed building erected in the 1850s and formerly used as a brewer's warehouse, has been the jewel in the crown since 2006. If you like your musicians sandwiched between burlesque acts and performance poetry, look no further.

**[blackboxbelfast.com](http://blackboxbelfast.com)**

## **OH YEAH MUSIC CENTRE**

Follow the cobbled streets from The Black Box to Gordon Street to discover the most important facility for aspiring artists in Belfast: the Oh Yeah Music Centre.

Featuring rehearsal rooms, recording studios, performance spaces and more, this building – the brainchild of Snow Patrol’s Gary Lightbody and friends – is currently doing great things.

**[ohyeahbelfast.com](http://ohyeahbelfast.com)**

## **KELLY’S CELLARS**

There are many pubs offering regular traditional Irish music nights in Belfast, but none older or more authentic than Kelly’s Cellars. Built in 1720, it’s been a public house for much of the time since, and its whitewashed walls, dipping floors, and cast of colourful characters makes it a must for all musical tourists.

**[kellyscellars.com](http://kellyscellars.com)**

## **LOCAL MEDIA**

### **ACROSS THE LINE**

BBC Radio Ulster's flagship local music programme airs every Monday evening from 8pm to 10pm, fronted by long-term presenter Rigsy and Stuart Bailie. Its remit is to support local artists.

[bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007cpgz](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007cpgz)

### **CULTURE NORTHERN IRELAND**

Dedicated to promoting the arts in Northern Ireland, this digital publication features and reviews local musicians. Its budget is small but they also offer a dynamic listings portal.

[culturenorthernireland.org](http://culturenorthernireland.org)

### **THE BIG LIST**

Visitors to Belfast will find copies everywhere. This compact publication also offers micro-reviews and features, but its strength is in its listings. Artists performing in Northern Ireland can and should make solid use of it.

[thebiglist.co.uk](http://thebiglist.co.uk)

## **FESTIVALS**

### **OUT TO LUNCH**

Belfast's cultural year kicks off in January with this affordable, fun festival, cheering everyone up during the most depressing month of the year. Eclectic is the word of this little brother to the later Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival.

**[cqaf.com](http://cqaf.com)**

### **BELFAST NASHVILLE SONGWRITERS FESTIVAL**

Panarts' diverse ode to lyricists and melody makers brings a bit of the Deep South to Belfast. Clayton Hotel is the scene as soulful home-grown talents like Gareth Dunlop perform alongside American imports.

**[belfastnashville.com](http://belfastnashville.com)**



## **BELSONIC**

Shine Productions' annual outdoor festival takes place in Custom House Square in June. At 5,000 capacity, it affords festivalgoers an opportunity to get intimate with global acts like Arcade Fire and Faithless and regularly features local acts on the support bill.

**[belsonic.com](http://belsonic.com)**

## **AVA FESTIVAL**

For two days in June, AVA takes over the T13 urban sports park in Titanic Quarter, and offers a range of talks, panels, workshops, networking and gigs. It's an eye-catching event for electronic aficionados.

**[avafestival.com](http://avafestival.com)**

## **BELFAST VITAL**

This three-day outdoor event has been moved a little out of town, to the Boucher Road Playing Fields, and is as mainstream as they come. Previous headliners include Muse, Tiesto and Clean Bandit.

**[facebook.com/BelfastVital](https://facebook.com/BelfastVital)**

## **SOUND OF BELFAST**

Now in its fourth year, it's co-ordinated by Charlotte Dryden and her team at the Oh Yeah Music Centre. As a showcase for Northern Irish artists, it features gigs aplenty, workshops and panel discussions, and culminates with the Northern Ireland Music Prize.

**[soundofbelfast.com](http://soundofbelfast.com)**

## **EDUCATION**

### **SONIC ARTS RESEARCH CENTRE**

Its ultra-modern campus in South Belfast enables students to study a range of short- and long-term graduate and postgraduate courses built around interdisciplinary research in music and sound.

**[sarc.qub.ac.uk](http://sarc.qub.ac.uk)**

## **MOVING ON MUSIC**

Fostering and promoting local jazz, folk, roots, traditional, classical and other minority genre artists in Northern Ireland, they offer year round educational projects such as their Emerging Artist Programme.

**[movingonmusic.com](http://movingonmusic.com)**

## **STUDIOS**

### **START TOGETHER STUDIOS**

Located in the Oh Yeah Music Centre, Start Together houses three top-class recording spaces. It's a beautiful environment in which to work – all fairy lights and Afghan rugs – and is considered something of a second home by local acts, including exmagician.

**[starttogetherstudio.com](http://starttogetherstudio.com)**

## **CLOUD 9**

Belfast Underground Academy is quietly ambitious, doing what the big funded centres do without asking for much in return. Its vastly experienced producers and engineers have recorded hundreds of songs here, most with a characteristic electro bent.

**[cloud9studios.com](http://cloud9studios.com)**

## **REDBOX RECORDING STUDIOS**

Redbox is an understated facility on University Street run by multi-talented musical friends Cormac O’Kane, Donal O’Connor and Oonagh Derby. A range of services are available, from mixing and mastering to room hire, and genre artists will take much away from working with this tuneful trio.

**[redboxrecording.com](http://redboxrecording.com)**

## **RECORD STORES**

### **BELFAST UNDERGROUND RECORDS**

Belfast Underground is a holistic organisation that features an educational academy, recording studios, a radio station, and record store from its base on Queen Street. The focus is on electronic music, so don't expect to find The Rolling Stones here. Dubstep, house and techno fans, meanwhile, can browse for hours.

**[belfastunderground.co.uk/record-store](http://belfastunderground.co.uk/record-store)**

### **DRAGON RECORDS**

Located in Wellington Place, near City Hall, Dragon Records is a quintessential new and second-hand record store. High Fidelity fans rejoice! Nothing is off limits, while all sorts of rarities and B-side collections are there to be discovered.

**[dragonrecordsbelfast.blogspot.co.uk](http://dragonrecordsbelfast.blogspot.co.uk)**

## **HEAD RECORDS**

Head Records also has independent record stores in Dublin and Leamington Spa. While more commercial in feel, it nevertheless affords music lovers a nostalgic shopping trip down memory lane, with real-life CDs, cassettes, posters, t-shirts and other paraphernalia packing out the shelves.

**[wearehead.com](http://wearehead.com)**

## **THE LOCAL VIEW**

“When I think of Belfast, I think of people, I think of music, and I think of unity. It’s a city keen to keep moving forward. Belfast’s music infrastructure continues to grow and develop, with the emergence of the likes of Help Musicians NI, various management companies and labels, and an industry that speaks with one voice, as demonstrated recently when the Cathedral Quarter came under threat from developers.”

**Caroline Sewell,  
MU Scotland and Northern Ireland**

“We started Champion Sound Music in 2010 and we look after five artists at the minute, including Ryan Vail and Ciaran Lavery, who have collectively been streamed more than 100 million times on Spotify. We have five albums shortlisted for the 2017 Northern Ireland Music Prize, which we’re very happy about. The music scene is really vibrant at the minute and it’s great to see so many female voices coming to the fore.”

**Lyndon Stephens,  
Champion Sound Music**



# Taking The Pledge

Crowdfunding used to be seen as a last port of call to get your project funded. But the concept has quickly become the new business model for music production.

**Report by Will Simpson**

**Over the past decade crowdfunding has gone from being a last resort for cult bands spurned by record labels to a mainstream model that many musicians and artists will use during their careers. While Kickstarter is still probably the platform most synonymous with the concept, it's PledgeMusic that is fast becoming the one with the greatest caché inside the UK music industry.**

Co-founded in 2009 by musician Benji Rogers and ex-Warners and Universal A&R man Malcolm Dunbar (president of PledgeMusic UK and Europe), crowdfunding remains their core business. But the scope of the company has enlarged so it now encompasses many of the responsibilities of a traditional record label. As Julian Wall, PledgeMusic's director industry relations explains: "It's as much now about pre-

ordering, getting product direct to fans, and developing a musician's career as it is helping them to make that album.”

Indeed, Pledge has led campaigns for DVDs, films, books, even selling tickets for tours, but unlike other platforms it is 100% music-related. The site supported over 1,200 record releases in 2016 – a significant percentage of the total albums released that year. Many heritage artists from Echo & The Bunnymen to Erasure to Kevin Godley have used PledgeMusic to launch albums. But while the site occasionally approaches established acts, the vast majority of projects arrive via emerging artists that initiate contact themselves.

Central to the PledgeMusic structure are the campaign managers. They are the individuals who will sit down with the artist and work out what is realistically achievable. “After the initial conversation we will usually get stuck straight into the finer details of the campaign,” explains senior campaign manager Joe Morrison. “They’ll be questions like: ‘what should the target be? What kind of items work best on your site? How should you price things?’”

## **Plan your campaign**

Campaigns usually last between three and six months – “short enough so people keep an urge to pledge and feel excited, but also not selling yourself so short that fans can’t find the project within the time limit,” notes Morrison. The next stage comes two months after the deadline, when the artist gets everything sorted – be that recording or mixing and mastering. Finally, there is fulfilment: the sending-out of all the items promised to the fans and campaign-supporters.

Over 85% of Pledge projects hit their target, but if for some reason the artist doesn’t raise the agreed funds then there are a number of options open to them: extending the deadline, downscaling the project, or closing the campaign down completely. Either way, the artist walks away without any financial burden on them. Pledge charges no upfront fee, but a 15% commission on all successful campaigns.

For many artists Pledge has opened up doors that would have otherwise been closed in an increasingly risk-averse industry. London-based duo Aya are an example of this. They had recorded some tracks with Lamb’s Andy

Barlow but were suddenly offered a support slot on Lamb's tour, which required hiring extra musicians, a sound engineer, and eventually the recording of a single. "Then we did all the figures and went '\*\*\*\*!'," recalls co-vocalist Bess Cavendish. "We'd heard about Pledge and didn't know if it would be a cool thing to do. But after we researched it we realised that in this day and age most people need private funding and that it was a good option."

## **Raising the funds**

"So we had a meeting with a campaign manager and he was really positive. We had two weeks before the gigs started and didn't know if we could raise the £3,000 within that time frame. But we did it! People that we hadn't spoken to for years came out of the woodwork. We found out that we had more of a fanbase than we realised."

Meanwhile, London-based electro outfit Jagara turned to Pledge when they wanted to fund a video, undertake live rehearsals, and recruit a drummer. As the band's keyboard player Cat Edmondson recalls: "After we met our target we managed to get a grant from Pledge's Emerging Artists Fund, which they offer to people who

have run a successful Pledge campaign. That gave us extra funding for touring.”

## **The human factor**

Other crowdfunding sites exist, of course, but Pledge prides itself on being particularly musician-friendly. “We are a very hands-on platform,” suggests Morrison. “If you submit to our site there is a human being at the other end that you’re interacting with. You’re not thrown into an automated world of auto responses and voicemails.”

On top of that, PledgeMusic has an existing community of music fans. “I have this mantra that you should be leaving PledgeMusic with more fans than you arrived with,” says Wall. “We find that around 30% of any project is delivered by the existing Pledge community. And all this data is free and available to use. It’s not kept by PledgeMusic, it’s shared with all the artists, with the names of all the people who have contributed to their campaign.”

So far from being a last refuge for musicians, Pledge is fast becoming an established part of the music industry’s infrastructure. “We are

working now with labels across the industry and trade bodies such as AIM, BPI, PRS, helping new and developing musicians,” confirms Wall. “You come into an environment that not only has knowledge, experience and connections, but also has the empathy and the understanding to work with you on whatever you want to achieve. Whilst we are not alone in the industry, we are a strong partner for any musician looking to develop their career.” To learn more, go to [tinyurl.com/pledgemu](https://tinyurl.com/pledgemu)

## **Kevin Godley**

One time 10cc member and esteemed video director Kevin Godley has always been ahead of the curve when it has come to accessing new music technology, so it is no surprise that he has used PledgeMusic for his upcoming solo album *Muscle Memory*. However, unlike other campaigns he is using it as a creative tool, asking fellow musicians to submit instrumental excerpts that he will turn into collaborative pieces, with an equal 50/50 copyright share.

“It’s always been important for me to instigate changes in my own musical approach, be aware of new technologies, and to encourage fellow musicians to take full advantage of an increasing ability to collaborate with one another globally,” he explains. “So this is one way to harness all the above via a call-to-arms to musicians and music fans alike. Thanks to the Musicians’ Union and PledgeMusic, a project that would have taken untold months to get off the ground in the ‘good old days’ of the music industry is now a singing and playing reality.”



**A GUIDE TO:**

# VIRTUAL REALITY

Virtual and augmented reality are tipped to become major forces in the music industry of tomorrow. Henry Yates investigates how these artificial worlds could generate cold, hard cash in the physical realm.

**Virtual reality (VR) is on the rise. From its roots as a curio for early-adopter video-gamers, this burgeoning tech – alongside its close cousin, augmented reality (AR) – is expected to generate \$150bn in revenue by 2020, leaving no industry untouched in the longer-term. But it's the music business that could feel the most seismic shift.**

Ever since a hologram of the long-dead US rapper Tupac Shakur wowed the Coachella Festival in 2012, there's been a growing appetite to capitalise on VR and AR, whether that's major players such as Warners and Live Nation partnering with tech firms, Scottish rock band Biffy Clyro releasing a UK-first 360° video for *Flammable*, or London singer-songwriter



Imogen Heap performing to a global audience sat at home in their headsets. And according to Anthony Matchett, CEO of British VR start-up MelodyVR, the snowball has just started rolling. “There are 12 million headsets worldwide. In a year’s time, there’ll probably be a hundred million. It’s growing phenomenally quickly.”

The benefits of VR and AR for music fans are well-documented. Soon, by putting on a VR headset, you could enjoy the kind of immersive first-person experiences that money can’t buy, perhaps standing onstage with your favourite band as they play Madison Square Garden, or kicking back in the control room while they record their new album. With an AR projector you could even beam a hologram of the London Symphony Orchestra direct into your living room. Tom Szirtes is the founder of Mbryonic – a British VR studio that has worked with labels such as Columbia – and he believes it could go further still. “You could just have a gig in a bedroom, but what if you created something with computer graphics that takes the audience anywhere? So you could be on top of a mountain watching a gig with dragons flying overhead. Ultimately, we’re increasingly going to be

living in these virtual worlds. The question is monetisation. If we can do it right, I think virtual reality has the opportunity to add value to music that's been lost through the internet and streaming.”

## **Money matters**

So how might VR and AR turn a profit for musicians? One route, explains Matchett, is for proactive bands to create a variety of VR experiences, then sell them at a range of price points, either direct to fans or via platforms such as Oculus or his own MelodyVR. “On our platform, there are a few different types of content. There are free previews of premium content. And then there's premium content itself. And we work out with the artist to decide what's going to be free and what content will be premium. Maybe that's being at Abbey Road while the band are writing an album, or in their hometown in Colombia or wherever it might be. Obviously, there's going to be some free content, but one of the massive drivers for us is to inject a new revenue stream into the music industry. Something that doesn't cannibalise album sales, isn't trying to compete with streaming: it's a very different thing.”

Another potential revenue stream, suggests MU Assistant General Secretary, Naomi Pohl, could be for songwriters to license their music to other VR and AR projects. “I think there will be opportunities for synchronisation. VR and AR games or experiences will require music or a soundtrack, so there’s potential for our tech-savvy members to make contact with companies and get their music out there. It could be an opportunity for licence fees to be paid to musicians on the recordings they use, in the same way as happens with video games, films and adverts.”

## **Product power**

As ever, the biggest paydays for musicians could be found in the corporate world. As CEO of Digital Catapult, Jeremy Silver has seen a surge in VR/AR advertising by big-hitters including Nike and Coca-Cola.

“A big area where work is being commissioned is by brands who are promoting a new car or a new airline experience,” he explains. “And there is a need for music. How much new music they commission, I’d say it’s still relatively small. But the format is evolving. And as the cost of

production comes down and the production values go up, then the opportunity for music to play interesting and new roles in that environment is clearly there.

“Another interesting area, from a musician’s perspective,” continues Silver, “is how much VR is being used in training and teaching. A lot of industry centres use VR to help people learn skills that are difficult. At the moment, they tend to focus on things that are very high-risk, like open-heart surgery or decommissioning nuclear power plants. But it’s clear that the model of training in virtual environments is compelling. So it could be used in music education and teaching people how to play instruments, literally by filming a musician in 3D to put into a VR environment.”

## **Going live**

While songwriters and music educators stand to gain from the VR and AR boom, perhaps the most tantalising prospects are within reach of live bands. The fundamental model of touring has always been that a band goes from venue-to-venue, bearing the associated costs of travel, booking agents, hotels and so forth. But with

VR, a band could play just one gig in a single venue, relayed in real-time to fans in headsets across the world – an evolution of the popular National Theatre Live concept, in which plays are broadcast in cinemas. This development would not only be of benefit to fans, who can catch the show remotely at a reduced price, but also for bands, who could write off the punitive costs of touring, while selling tickets to a global audience that far outstrips the capacity of any stadium.

“One of our big drivers for starting MelodyVR,” says Matchett, “is that you have so many people around the world who love music, but never get to see it. Maybe they’re not old enough. Maybe they can’t afford it – because frankly going to gigs these days isn’t cheap – or maybe it’s sold out. Whether it’s the Kentish Town Forum or Wembley, as soon as those tickets are sold out, all you’re doing is driving the secondary market – and that’s exactly what we don’t want. The artist doesn’t benefit. Nobody benefits. It’s just negative for the industry as a whole. From our point of view, the idea is that whether we record content or deliver content live, you could have literally billions of people around the world tuned into a concert – which means that hopefully

we can reach all of those fans that wouldn't otherwise be able to have that experience."

Meanwhile, Silver envisages the scenario whereby an AR holographic projection of a performer is beamed onto the stage at venues around the world. "The technique they used with Tupac onstage at Coachella was pretty much the Victorian technique of smoke and mirrors," he says. "But where that might go is not just that you could have a holographic live performance of an orchestra playing in your living room, but that you could potentially have a musician beamed from another part of the world, playing with a band, even though they're physically not there. Whether that's five, ten or fifteen years away, it's really hard for anyone to say, because this stuff moves in such interesting and unexpected ways."

## **Get futureproofed**

VR and AR might be on the march, but the experts concur that it hasn't quite infiltrated the mainstream. "The question I'm always asked," says Matchett, "is when there's going to be a VR device in every home. And the short answer to that is: it doesn't happen overnight. The headsets now are higher-quality, less bulky, less clunky.



It's still not quite there. But a couple of months ago, Oculus brought out a new headset device called Oculus Go, which is much cheaper, higher-quality and more ergonomic. It feels to us like the first consumer-focused headset. So it's growing. It's not going to be a case of 12 million headsets today and then a billion tomorrow. But every day it's increasing."

For musicians, concludes Naomi Pohl, the smart move is to do their research, stay abreast of tech and trends, and plan their attack for the day when VR and AR goes overground. "Hopefully, our members will get clued-up, read up about it and go to events. Obviously, the creators of the technology are keen to sell it, so there are opportunities to actually go and try it out. And just get thinking, be creative about what the possibilities could be. If you have a brilliant idea, maybe approach a tech company, because they might be looking to work with other creators. We have a tendency to see new technologies as a potential threat. I think actually we should see VR and AR as a new opportunity. Technology and music go hand-in-hand..."

## **VIRTUAL REALITY: A MUSICIAN'S TAKE**

As co-founder of UK band The Indelicates, Simon Clayton chose VR as the medium to release a single. He argues that creating an attention-grabbing virtual experience can help bands get creative, stand out in an untapped market, find a fanbase and make money. “You could explore a room waiting for a rocket to go off, which tied into the lyrics of the song,” he explains. “VR forces you to pay attention to the music in a way that you wouldn’t if you were just putting on a CD.”

“It’s about doing anything that helps you stand out,” he adds. “We are the only British indie band with an experience on the Oculus shop. So the benefits of being very unusual in that space kind of outweigh the downsides of it being a small market. At the moment, there aren’t enough headsets for it to be particularly viable. However, once it’s normal to have a headset in your house, then it makes perfect sense for musicians



to be thinking: ‘Well, there’s going to be this huge market – what can I do to reach it?’”

## **TOP 5 TIPS**

### **Exploiting virtual reality**

#### **1 Try the tech**

If you’ve never tried a VR headset or AR app, educate yourself now. A working knowledge is the first step towards creating an experience that people are prepared to pay for.

#### **2 Do your research**

It’s vital to keep an eye on the developing tech and be aware of what’s possible. Read up on the subject and attend VR/AR lectures held by organisations such as PRS for Music.

#### **3 Find a partner**

If you’re not confident in your abilities to create a VR/AR experience, enlist a tech

firm or an individual filmmaker to help you. An underwhelming product is worse than no product.

#### **4 Embrace the corporate dollar**

In the coming years, many firms will enter the VR universe. Keep your ears open for syncing opportunities, whether that's for adverts, films, or video games.

#### **5 Investigate the platforms**

From Oculus to PlayStation VR, there are plenty of sites out there selling VR/AR content. Have a look, investigate the pricing structure and set your budget.

#### **TOP TIP**

#### **THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX**

The more original your VR/AR experience, the more likely it is to spark imaginations and shift units. Check out what other acts are doing – then raise the stakes.

**INTRODUCTION TO...**

# **NEGOTIATING POINTS**

Negotiating a deal can be a tricky process, especially if you're new to the process. Ben Jones explains what to expect when you are working out the points.

**As the famous adage goes, traditional record contracts used to be 'two pages telling you what you will get and 75 pages telling you why you won't get it'! Fortunately, that is no longer always the case, but as with any contract, it is simply a question of understanding what is being offered, and what it means in real terms. Much will depend on the type of agreement being offered, but royalties are nearly always negotiable, depending on the relative bargaining position of each party.**

Paul Russell, solicitor at P Russell & Co, who runs the MU's Contract Advisory Service, outlines what you might receive from different types of deals: "The percentage an artist could expect to

receive from a net receipts deal is usually 50% (in some cases 60% may be offered). On Published Price to Dealer (PPD) it might be 20% and on retail it might be 13%. Other issues are also just as important to consider, such as which deductions are being made. Under net receipts deals, all costs are recoverable whereas, under a PPD/retail calculation, only agreed deductions can be made, but the level must be negotiated”.

## **Calculate your deal**

Naomi Pohl, Assistant General Secretary (Music Industry) at the MU, echoes Paul’s sentiments, saying: “We’ve always advised that 50/50 deals on net profits are acceptable as a bottom line on a traditional record deal. With points on net profits it’s crucial to analyse the list of costs the label can deduct from gross income to calculate the net profit figure”. But what exactly are points? Paul clarifies what this means: “Points is a simple colloquialism referring to a percentage. It is short for percentage points, the points being the number. So 20% is 20 points”.

There has been an increasing trend towards net receipts deals, especially at the indie level, since it is generally perceived as being easier

for the company to account on that basis. This particularly applies to income from streaming services such as Spotify. However, there are potential problems with this from an artist's perspective. If you are signed to an independent label but that label uses a major label as an international distributor, there is a risk that your royalties are calculated only on the share of income received by the indie. This could be as low as 40% of overall income, which makes your share far smaller than you'd expect.

Labels nearly always want to offer a percentage of the net income they actually receive from streaming sites, even if the rest of the deal is based on PPD. Depending on the company, the percentage being offered is anything from 20 to 50%. Points on PPD are more transparent from the artist's perspective in theory, but streaming services work on a subscription model, which doesn't produce a PPD figure.

“The Union would like to see streaming royalties paid out on a better royalty rate than physical sales,” Naomi adds, “but in reality streaming royalties are usually disproportionately low, even if the points assigned look reasonable,

because of the calculation of the net receipts figure. It's difficult to ascertain how much exactly the label receives from the streaming site and how that relates to your music. The Union is campaigning for greater transparency in the streaming revenue stream.”

Alternatively, you may wish to record your own music, retain the copyright in the recording and then use a label as a distributor, or just find an online distributor instead. This will enable you to keep control of your rights and the majority of the income. An online distributor may charge a monthly fee or take a share of around 15% of income, but shouldn't do both. “For labels, in respect of their distribution deals, the distributor will normally take between 20–30% of the income,” says Paul Russell.

Overall, it is important to remember how many income streams exist in the modern recording industry, so an agreement may list different percentages depending on how the revenue is generated. Naomi explains: “You should get a share of all income generated by the label in relation to your music – so that includes sales, streaming, and even proceeds from the sale

of equity purchased in streaming services. The latter isn't a given, but we are assured by labels that profits generated from shares would be passed on to artists”.

The Music Managers Forum (MMF) is campaigning for greater transparency for artists and managers to access data about how income is generated and distributed. The MMF's Deals Guide identifies ten different types of deals that could apply, ranging from DIY distributors through to major labels , which can be found here: [tinyurl.com/mmfdealsguide](http://tinyurl.com/mmfdealsguide)

## **Choose your deal**

As well as royalties to bands and artists, one area that often causes confusion is the role of producers and how they are engaged. Naomi Pohl notes: “A producer who has contributed creatively to a recording will most likely get points. You may just pay a flat fee for recording services, but as always it depends on the upfront negotiation, the role of the producer, and their profile”. Paul Russell says the rate payable to producers will vary greatly with their profile and the profile of the artist, and will usually come from the artist's share. “Anything around 3-5% based on PPD is normal,” he says.



Although recording deals are – as the name suggests – primarily focused on exploitation and income derived from the recording of a composition, it may be the case that your rights in the song itself, and subsequent publishing income, are part of the negotiation. It depends on the exact circumstances and what the contribution of the producer is, both in terms of production (including performance on the recording itself) and, separately, any contribution to the composition. Cameron Craig, executive director of the Music Producers' Guild (MPG), says: “If you’ve got little or no money upfront, you’ve got to trade something. This could potentially mean rights in the recording or composition. In this situation, the key point is that the conversation about splits has to be had so everyone knows what is expected of them. It all comes down to transparency”.

As Naomi has already outlined, there are no set answers when it comes to recording agreements, a view that is reinforced by Cameron. “Because production deals are so variable, the MPG wasn’t able to come up with a standard position that worked for everyone,” he says. “Every producer and mixer has a different way of working and



brings a different value to the project.”

Overall, whoever is involved, the message is clear – get advice before signing any recording agreement so you can make a reasoned decision on what is being offered.

## **CONTRACT ADVISORY SERVICE (CAS)**

Should you be offered a contract, such as a recording agreement, the MU will arrange for a specialist employment lawyer to review it and provide you with appropriate advice on the contract. The lawyer will also provide you with practical advice and guidance should you wish to negotiate better terms with your employer.

Additionally, MU Officials can assist with a CAS Aftercare service to advise you further by instructing the solicitors to carry out further work or negotiations on your behalf, to try and finalise your contract for signature.

Please note that if you decide to instruct your own solicitors we will be unable to provide CAS or Aftercare, and it is only available where all the band members are MU members, or indeed join. For more advice on CAS, please contact your Regional Office.

# Reviews

A look at some of the new albums, EPs and downloads released by MU members for 2017, together with links for more information on the featured artists.

**Reviewers: Keith Ames & Tom Short**

## **Kirsty Merryn**

Close on the heels of the *Just The Winter EP*, Kirsty launched her debut album *She And I* in November. Her delicate piano playing and elegant voice soon came to the attention of the acoustic scene, and demonstrated her skills as a vocalist, songwriter and performer.

Kirsty hails from the New Forest, but is now based in SE London, and has gained the support of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

“I’m really excited to be releasing an album that focuses predominantly on stories about women,” she explains. “I hope it will introduce some of my female heroes to a new audience and open up some fantastic stories that haven’t been told in the folk community yet.” This album focuses on stories of inspirational women,

including Emma Hamilton and Annie Edson Taylor – first person to survive going over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Generating interest beyond the folk world is her ballad *Forfarshire*, which brings a fresh twist to the tale of lighthouse keeper's daughter Grace Darling and her rescue of shipwrecked mariners.

## **KIRSTY MERRYN**

*She & I*

Kirsty's delivery and style are very much in the English folk tradition. Yet these beautifully wrought tales of the lives of ordinary women are brought up to date with dense layers of guitar effects and synthesised instrumentation.

**[kirstymerryn.com](http://kirstymerryn.com)**

## **AMERICANA**

### **NORTON MONEY**

*The Ballad Of Hi And Lo*

This Americana group have recently expanded to a four-piece, and the development has paid off with a beefier sound and bassist Anna Robinson's vocals making the wistful driving songs increasingly dynamic and widescreen.

**nortonmoney.com**

### **THE EMPTY PAGES**

*The Empty Pages*

An impressive debut blends British and Appalachian folk styles to great effect. Luscious harmonies and bewitching guitar, keys and mandolin suggest that they should make this a full-time concern.

**theemptypages.co.uk**

### **BROKEN FLOWERS**

*So Many Shadows*

The Leeds-based band produce catchy, lovelorn pop songs, straight out of the soundtrack

of a romcom. There's plenty of romantic misadventures charted here, but the music is pure sunshine.

**brokenflowers.co.uk**

## **KIM LOWINGS AND THE GREENWOOD**

*Wild & Wicked Youth*

There's a compelling contrast on this album between its traditional dark subject matter and buoyant arrangements inspired by modern country-pop.

**kimlowings.com**

## **INSTRUMENTAL**

## **SIMON MCCORRY**

*Blue*

The liner notes indicate an intention to fight against the confines of metronomic time. Comprising of long passages of drones and heavily manipulated bell sounds, the result is an eerie, intense listen. Gorgeous passages of bowed cello add welcome depth.

**simonmccorry.com**

## **MICHALA PETRI & LARS HANNIBAL**

*Garden Party*

Leading recorder player Michala Petri has teamed up again with her long-running musical partner, guitarist Lars Hannibal for a magical album of character pieces, chosen for their descriptive quality.

**[michalapetri.com](http://michalapetri.com)**

## **ROCK/POP**

### **MICK SHARP**

*Mick Sharp*

Milton Keynes based singer-songwriter Mick steps into the limelight with an enjoyable blend of light-funk and classic AOR balladry, served with enough hooks to merit serious airplay.

**[micksharp.co.uk](http://micksharp.co.uk)**

### **JON MAYBEY**

*Banish Misfortune*

Having honed his production skills with folk/fusion band Elephant Talk, Jon strikes out with his own album of compelling originals.



A beguiling blend of Celtic and Baltic jams merged with danceable electronica.

**jonmaybey.com**

## **LIEMBA**

*Burning Wicks*

This Brighton duo have a knack for writing unashamedly earnest ballads. They do groovy too – *Dust* has a slinky soft rock shuffle, plus a brilliant vocal turn from Swede Elin Ivarsson.

**liembamusic.bandcamp.com**

## **SONGWRITER**

### **CLIVE GREGSON & LIZ SIMCOCK**

*Underwater Dancing*

Clive has established a niche for his eclectic pop songs and inventive guitar playing. His latest partnership with up-and-coming singer songwriter Liz has resulted in another fine album of delightful, catchy songs.

**gregsonsimcock.com**

## **CAL RAASAY**

57-6

Occupying a shadowy region between post-rock and spectral folk, this bewitching five-track from the enigmatic Newcastle songwriter is a fascinating listen, veering between sonic abandon and trembling beauty.

**[calraasay.bandcamp.com](http://calraasay.bandcamp.com)**

## **DUDLEY PHILLIPS**

*Bassheartmantra*

One man band Dudley creates an astonishing range of sounds with just his compelling bass playing and palm percussion. His reflective, fusion compositions provide often beguiling meanderings.

**[bassheartmantra.com](http://bassheartmantra.com)**

## **ROOTS**

## **THE EMILY ASKEW BAND**

*Alchemy*

Emily's explorations of medieval music sound thoroughly authentic. But she is also fascinated

by the possibilities of combining this style with electronics and minimalism, as on *O Virgo Splendens*.  
**[emilyaskew.co.uk](http://emilyaskew.co.uk)**

## **LAUREN MACCOLL**

*The Seer*

Lauren has received numerous awards for her immersive tributes to Highland culture. This project expertly blends traditional instrumentation with subtle gestures to world music cultures.  
**[laurenmaccoll.co.uk](http://laurenmaccoll.co.uk)**

## **RED PRIEST**

*The Baroque Bohemians*

Red Priest bring their unique energy to bear on some traditional songs and the classical music which they inspired. A frivolous attitude coupled with first-class musicianship. Recommended.  
**[redpriest.com](http://redpriest.com)**

## **FOLK/BLUES**

### **DAI & THE RAMBLERS**

*Bon Bon*

There's a great deal going on beneath the gentle surface of this charming roots album. Holding it together is the mellow voice of Dai Price, whose honeyed tones should soundtrack many a relaxing evening this winter.

**daiprice.com**

### **GIGSPANNER**

*The Wife Of Urban Law*

Peter Knight's project is truly at the forefront of modern folk music. Returning as a trio, the group know exactly when to pay tribute to tradition, while quietly pushing an open-minded definition of what this music can be.

**gigspanner.com**

### **ROLL WYN JAMES**

*The Blues No.6*

It's hard to believe that this rollicking blues album is the product of an extended jam session.

A selection of frictionless grooves, with just enough space for a few rip-roaring guitar solos.

**[rollwynjames.bandcamp.com](http://rollwynjames.bandcamp.com)**

## **JAZZ**

### **RAPHAEL, WILKINSON & HODGKINS**

*PizzaExpress Live*

This live chamber jazz album exhibits a wonderful chemistry between the trio of trumpeter Chris Hodgkins, pianist Lenore Raphael and guitarist Wayne Wilkinson. Captivating.

**[chrishodgkins.co.uk](http://chrishodgkins.co.uk)**

### **GABRIEL LATCHIN TRIO**

*Introducing*

Enthralling piano-led jazz in the Bill Evans mould. A fine balance of well-chosen classics and zesty originals makes for a varied, head bopping listen, in wonderfully poised style.

**[gabriellatchin.com](http://gabriellatchin.com)**

## **NATASHA SEALE**

*A Bigger Sky*

Natasha's own material explores luxurious jazz-pop. Tasteful combinations of sax, percussion and keys form the perfect bed for these timeless torch songs.

**[natashasingjazz.com](http://natashasingjazz.com)**

### **Stand out**

We have chosen a pair of albums that stand out from the crowd and have established themselves as top pick favourites on our playlists.

### **THE RAMONAS**

*First World Problems*

This ferocious four-piece have evolved into a very different beast from their tribute-act beginnings. Punk pop is still to the fore, charged with the grit of riot grrrl and cutting lyrics that take aim at Trump, middle class apathy and the right-wing media.

**[ramonas.co.uk](http://ramonas.co.uk)**

## **MARICI SAXES**

*Light*

Sax quartets may be a rare prospect outside of the jazz world, but this collective are a brilliant example of what four horns can bring to well-established classical repertoire, with skilful arrangements lending them a unique quality.

**maricisaxes.com**

To submit an album or download track for review, send recordings and PR material to:

The Musician, 60-62 Clapham Rd, London SW9 0JJ or email **TheMusician@theMU.org**

You should also forward your cover artwork and/or photos (minimum 300dpi resolution) to: **keith.ames@theMU.org**

We try to help as many members as possible, and preference is given to members not previously reviewed.

# Tributes

## **Bob Molcher**

### **Popular and well-travelled orchestral French horn player**

Born in Splott in Cardiff in 1928, Bob was encouraged into music by his euphonium playing grandfather. He began cornet lessons but soon moved to the band's only french horn. Such was his progress on the horn that at the age of fifteen he was offered a job with the Kurt Joos Ballet Company. Parental opposition soon melted away when Bob told them his pay would be £11 a week with £2 a week touring allowance.

After his National Service he completed his studies at the RCM, and was appointed second horn in the Carla Rosa Opera Company. He stayed until its closure in 1960 whereupon he and several of his colleagues moved to Sadler's Wells. In 1966 Bob moved to the Scottish National Orchestra as fifth horn, soon becoming second, where he stayed until 1973.



When the WNO was forming its permanent orchestra Bob was invited back to his home town to become second horn. He was a perfectionist in all things and not given easily to compromise, and played for the next 20 years until his retirement in 1993.

Bob's funeral was held in St Alban's Church in Splott where he was baptised, and in whose band he discovered music.

## **David Shillaw**

## **Bill Barnacle**

### **Jazz trumpeter and session player to some surprising stars**

Much-loved jazz legend Bill Barnacle has sadly passed away, aged 90. He was a well-known face on the Dover and east Kent scene for more than 50 years. Born Arthur Edward Barnacle in Devonport in 1927, his father Percy was a marine bandmaster, and Bill followed in his footsteps by joining the marines in 1945, just as the war ended.

He served in the Middle East, and his first son Gary was born in Cyprus. Together with his wife

Jay they went on to have four more children – Steven, Peter, Julie and Sally – and his sons all took up music and formed the rather aptly named band Barnacle. By the mid-70s his sons had all moved to London and turned professional, which left Bill to concentrate on his first love – jazz. His group, The A1 Combination, played at Cullins Yard in Dover every Friday for almost 10 years.

However, he still kept his eye in playing with the younger set, and over the years he contributed to tracks on The Clash's seminal triple album *Sandinista*, as well as releases by The Ruts, Kim Wilde, and his son Gary's electro duo Leisure Process, for who he contributed a bugle passage under the quaintly cumbersome name of 22552474 Warrant Officer 'Big Bill' Barnacle.

**Jamie Thompson**

**Ray Davies**

**Trumpeter, composer and lead man of  
The Button Down Brass**

Born in Swansea in 1927, Ray's first appointment was with his local Naval League Cadet Band, but after attending the Royal College of Music he

played trumpet in a broad range of bands and theatre pits across London, for the likes of The Frank Cordell Orchestra, The Cyril Stapleton Orchestra, and Le London All Star.

He came to a broader public popularity when he was asked to form and front The Button Down Brass ensemble as a British response to Herb Alpert. Indeed, so popular did their albums become that the act was soon billed as 'Featuring The Funky Trumpet Of Ray Davies'.

Ray became a respected conductor and arranger, performing stints for the BBC's Radio Orchestras in London, Scotland and The Midlands, and the BBC Big Band. As if all this wasn't enough, he was also an accomplished songwriter. Over the years he either wrote for, arranged for, or accompanied artists including Liza Minnelli, The Rolling Stones, Morecambe & Wise, Petula Clark, Tony Bennett, The Beatles, Quincy Jones and Burt Bacharach.

Over that time he won many awards and songwriting grand prix, as well as the BASCA Gold Badge Award in 2011 for services to the songwriting and composing community. Prior to

this he had served as the chairman of the Gold Badge committee between 2004 and 2010, and chaired the PRS Benevolent Fund for many years.

He was famed for his delightful rudeness to the players, which they all loved, and an insistence on doing things his way. This often involved juggling with pieces of paper upon which he had scribbled his own unfathomable code while trying to organise an arrangement. Ray mastered his instrument in the 40s and 50s, and could evoke an accurate atmosphere of those eras effortlessly. His effortless talent and endless anecdotes will be sorely missed by anyone who was fortunate enough to have worked with him.

## **Roy Delaney**

## **Ronnie Keene**

### **Sax and clarinet player and popular bandleader**

Born in London in 1926, Ronnie moved to Worthing in 1939. He joined the Royal Artillery Band in Woolwich as a pianist and accordionist in 1944, later changing to tenor saxophone and clarinet. After his demob in 1947, he gigged in

Brighton before joining Ken Mackintosh at the Astoria Ballroom in Nottingham in 1948.

He played with many name bands, including those of Eric Winston and Nat Temple, before going freelance in the West End. He became the leader of his own band in 1956. Around this time he became a regular on the BBC, performing on the radio on *Music While You Work* and *Jazz Club*, and on TV on *Come Dancing* and *Six-Five Special*.

Over the years he was musical director on Buddy Holly's British tour, ran the resident band at Brighton's Top Rank Kings West Ballroom, and worked cruises on the QE2 and the SS Canberra, plus long engagements at venues in Brighton.

**Ralph Smith**

**Ian Holmes**

**Pioneer of popular Scottish accordion**

Born in a cottage in Irongray in Dumfriesshire in 1935, Ian had a tremendous gift for learning that carried on throughout his life. After buying his first accordion, he met the great Will Starr, who gave him advice on left-hand chording. Ian

started formal lessons with Alex Carter, who taught him light classical music, which he later reflected had been an excellent base for playing any repertoire.

His musical career continued to grow, guesting with the Scottish Dance bands of Bobby MacLeod and Andrew Rankine, including broadcasts on BBC Radio, an appearance with Andy Stewart at London's Festival Hall, and playing for *The White Heather Club* on TV.

He was a wonderful, warm, and truly gifted man, and his contribution to the Scottish dance scene was immense. I am truly honoured to have called him my friend.

**Mhorag Murphy**

**Eva Stewart**

**Wales's outstanding principal piccolo**

Eva stood out equally for her expert musicianship, her commitment to education and her sheer kindness. A finalist in BBC Young Musician, she studied at the Guildhall, taking her first post with Northern Sinfonia, before being

appointed principal piccolo of BBC National Orchestra of Wales, where she became known for her agile and expressive playing. She inspired not just a generation of students at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, but also countless members of the community.

A caring and highly valued member of the orchestra's community, visitors often remarked that she had been the first to cross the floor to welcome them. Eva died suddenly but peacefully on holiday after a busy Proms season.

**Charles Wilson**

**Sandi Russell**

**Much loved jazz singer and author**

Sandi sadly died aged 71, after a life well-lived and a significant career. She was born in Harlem of mixed African American and Native American parentage. Her musical talent was recognised early and she attended the original Fame High School of Music & Arts in New York City.

Before love and literature brought her to cross the pond to Durham in the early 1980s, Sandi had sung in all the major New York clubs, occasionally



venturing into musicals, as she did with the first production of *Hair*.

Despite enduring kidney disease, dialysis, and two transplants, Sandi continued to perform. Besides penning lyrics, she wrote poetry, essays, short stories, and a book on African American Women Writers, and will be remembered as both an artist, and a generous and staunch friend.

**Louise Gibbs**

**Raymond Carpenter**

**Principal clarinet at the BSO for nearly 35 years**

Ray was born on the 18 May 1922 in Woolwich, and attended the Duke of York's military school in Dover. At age 16 he signed up for the Royal Artillery Band and was immediately sent to Kneller Hall, The Royal Military School of Music, where he studied the violin and clarinet.

At the outbreak of war, he returned to the RA Band before taking up a job in the BSO as second clarinet. He was invited to become principal in 1953. Ray married Cynthia Mitchell in 1953, a violinist in the BSO who later became the co-leader of



the Bournemouth Sinfonietta. Ray retired from the BSO in 1987, but continued to play with both classical and jazz ensembles, often with Cynthia. He gave musical lectures and wrote books on the BSO and Constantin Silvestri. He passed away after a short illness, aged 95.

## **Nick Carpenter**

***The MU also notes the sad passing of:***

- **Phil Miller** Guitarist, Hatfield And The North
- **John Maxwell Geddes** Composer, educator
- **Jim Eddings** Session pianist, educator
- **Ivan Fox** Leader, D'Oyly Carte Orchestra
- **Virgil Howe** Drummer, Little Barrie
- **John Jack** Jazz producer and promoter
- **Melissa Bell** Singer, Soul II Soul
- **Billy Hatton** Bassist, The Fourmost

# Why I joined the MU

We asked some musicians about their reasons for joining the Union and why they treasure their Musicians' Union membership.

## **Jonathan Gregory**

“As a freelance music producer I was clueless when I got my first major industry opportunity. I needed help quickly and the first thought that came into my head was the MU. I remembered seeing a yellow sticker on a euphonium hard case nearly 30 years earlier which said ‘Keep Music Live’. I was about 12 at the time but I knew that one day I would need to join that Union. In my hour of need that childhood brass band memory lit up in my head and so, without hesitation, I booked an appointment with Paul Gray at the Cardiff office. Paul and the Union have been brilliant ever since! As a member it feels like I have an Industry Support System at my side 24/7, and the MU is my first and last stop for all my professional advice.”

Jonathan is a music producer and film and TV composer. He and his wife Sylvia are in-house composers for Kristofer Hivju's (Tormund Giantsbane in *Game Of Thrones*) film and TV production company, Tindefilm. In order to expand creatively beyond music, Jonathan has just set up a brand new TV production company, Screen Tales Ltd, with several projects in the pipeline. For more information, visit [goldcd.co.uk](http://goldcd.co.uk)

## **Thea Shengelaia**

“I joined the MU because I felt that it's a place where musicians meet, network and help each other. Having legal support is a great privilege. I was new to London and I spent days googling about the music industry here and came across the MU website, which was a discovery indeed. Attending this year's general meeting gave me an opportunity to meet like-minded people, and I was invited to join a Women in MU group. Every time I meet new musicians around London I always mention the fact that I'm a member of the MU and that it's a great place to secure a career. This way I spread the word and try to make it more popular in London among young musicians.”

Thea performs in a duo, The Healer Twins, with her twin sister Liana. They trained as medical doctors, but their unbreakable passion for music led them to form a duo in 2012, and since then they have been actively performing and recording. Thea and Liana are planning to release their first official music video soon and promise their fans that they will do more shows in London. They feel that they are quite unique in the way they combine music and medicine, incorporating the therapeutic effects of music into their songs. For more information, visit **[healertwins.co.uk](http://healertwins.co.uk)**

## **Diego Prato**

“I joined many years ago as a music student. At the time I remember being asked to play in the house band for a jam night by an old friend who was a drummer. During the course of the evening, and as different musicians got up to play, me and my friend were catching up and he told me that his drum kit had been stolen from a venue after a gig. I felt gutted for him. He later told me that fortunately enough his membership of the MU had meant he was able to obtain instrument insurance to cover the cost of his kit. I soon joined. All professional musicians know that in our line of work we have to push very hard

to be treated fairly and compensated properly for our work and skill. I think the MU is a significant help in this regard and we should strive to use and strengthen it.”

Diego is a guitarist from Manchester, who plays at some of the city’s most popular jazz and Latin venues, such as Matt & Phreds Jazz Club and Revolución de Cuba. He most frequently appears with the Tocha Latin band and the Prato Bell Luckin Trio, a jazz project (with bassist Arron Bell and drummer Joe Luckin) which released its debut album *Through The Tunnel* in 2017.

To hear it, pay a visit to

**[pratobellluckintrio.bandcamp.com](http://pratobellluckintrio.bandcamp.com)**

# Musicians' Union Election Results Independent Scrutineer's Report

**This report is issued in accordance with  
the Trades Union and Labour Relations  
(Consolidation) Act 1992 as amended.**

## **Executive Committee Elections**

### **Scotland & Northern Ireland**

(One to be elected)

**Alex Gasgoine**

**Elected Unopposed**

In accordance with Section 53 and MU Rules, 'Nothing in this Chapter shall be taken to require a ballot to be held at an uncontested election'. The number of members nominated in the election for the Scotland and Northern Ireland Region does not exceed the number to be elected, and a ballot is therefore not required.

## **North of England**

(Two to be elected)

<b>Kathy Dyson</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<b>Dave Pigott</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>Elected</b>
Brian Pilsbury	159	

Spoilt ballot papers	18	
Total ballot papers received	557	11%
Total ballot papers dispatched	5062	

## **Midlands**

(One to be elected)

<b>Pete Hartley</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>Elected</b>
Dan Whitehouse	130	

Spoilt ballot papers	23	
Total ballot papers received	338	13%
Total ballot papers dispatched	2697	

## **East & SE England**

(Four to be elected)

<b>Harriet Bennett</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<b>Nickie Dixon</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>Elected</b>
Tom Eagle	155	
<b>Julian Field</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<b>Andi Hopgood</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>Elected</b>
Xenia Horne	243	
Peter Willson	188	

Spoilt ballot papers	4	
Total ballot papers received	556	9%
Total ballot papers dispatched	6013	

## **Wales & SW England**

(One to be elected)

**Andy Gleadhill** **Elected Unopposed**

In accordance with Section 53 and MU Rules, 'Nothing in this Chapter shall be taken to require a ballot to be held at an uncontested election'. The number of members nominated in the election for the Wales and South West England Region does



not exceed the number to be elected, and a ballot is therefore not required.

## **London**

(Two to be elected)

Steve Done	247	
<b>Rick Finlay</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>Elected</b>
Joe Newman	103	
Nixon Rosembert	149	
Maxim Rowlands	164	
Brendan Thomas	267	
James Topp	95	
<b>Natalie Witts</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>Elected</b>
Spoilt ballot papers	19	
Total ballot papers received	955	11%
Total ballot papers dispatched	8885	

I am satisfied that there are no reasonable grounds for believing that there was any contravention of a requirement imposed by or under any enactment in relation to the election.

I am satisfied that the arrangements made with respect to the production, storage, distribution, return or other handling of the voting papers used in the election, and the arrangements for the counting of the votes, included all such security arrangements as were reasonably practicable for the purpose of minimising the risk that any unfairness or malpractice might occur.

I have been able to carry out my functions without such interference as would make it reasonable for any person to call my independence in relation to the union into question.

I have inspected the register of members and no matters were revealed which should be drawn to the attention of the union in order to assist it in securing that the register is accurate and up to date. I was not requested by any member or candidate to inspect or examine a copy of the membership register.

The MU did not appoint an Independent Person under Section 51A of the Act.

**Anne Hock**

Managing Director, Popularis Ltd

6 November 2017

**Any member of the Musicians' Union requiring a copy of the Scrutineer's Report should write to David Ashley, Assistant General Secretary, 60-62 Clapham Road, London SW9 0JJ with such a request enclosing a suitable SAE.**

## **COVER STAR**

# She's Got The Beat

This issue's cover star is drummer Siân Monaghan, who discusses her inspiration, her passion for her work and how her first drum teacher fuelled her creativity.

### **What does the MU mean to you?**

The Musicians' Union means a lot to me. It's a great network of people who are like-minded, and also caters for any career or legal advice I need along the way. Kind of like a career family!

### **Who has been the most inspirational influence on your musical career?**

Probably my first drum teacher who got me into orchestral percussion. He really captured my imagination, fuelled my creativity, and made it something I really wanted to do. Studying orchestral percussion early on has made me a more rounded drummer, and is probably the reason I do such a variety of things now.

## **What was the first point where you thought: 'I really am a musician'?**

My first pub gig was when I was 12, so I don't think there was a specific turning point that I could name. I think when I do studio sessions and get to play with drums and percussion all day is when it hits you how great your job is though.

## **What would be your dream gig?**

That's a tough one – I've got loads. I really enjoy playing to big crowds, so the dream would be a good festival headliner I'd say.

## **Where do you hope your career will be in three years time? And ten?**

Obviously you always want to be building on what you've currently got going on, but the beauty of doing this job is that you never know where it will take you.

## **If you weren't a musician, what would you be?**

I'd still be in music somehow I think. Probably be a stage tech or crew, just because I love the atmosphere of live shows.

## **What's the strangest place you've ever found yourself playing?**

Strange places always pop up on the gig list and

often end up being the most memorable shows. When I was with China Crisis we did a Far East tour that took us around some weird and wonderful places. The Japanese TV promo we did was pretty surreal!

### **Do you have a secret insider tip for playing your instrument better?**

Keeping your mind and body as relaxed as possible is the best way to approach any practise or gig situation. If your body is tense you won't play your best.

### **Do you think your friends and family are proud of what you've achieved?**

Yeah for sure. Thankfully, all of my family and a lot of my friends are musical, so they totally get it. They are all a great inspiration to me.

### **What does the next 12 months hold for you?**

I'll be spending some time in the studio with the band I play for called She Drew The Gun. I'm really looking forward to expanding on the sound we created for the first album. I'll also be working with bassist Derek Forbes [Simple Minds] for his live shows. I'm looking forward to expanding my electro/acoustic hybrid set-up for this one.

# Have you registered for your MU benefits?

While membership of the MU offers a wide range of free services, there are a number of benefits that you need to register or apply for.

## **MU website**

To fully access our website – **theMU.org** – you will need to register on your first visit using your membership number.

## **Instrument and equipment insurance**

For £2,000 worth of free musical instrument and equipment cover, register for the scheme by calling Hencilla Canworth on **020 8686 5050**.

## **Motoring service**

The MU Family Motoring and Accident Aftercare Services provides 24/7 cover. Members must enter discount code MU24 to obtain free membership of the scheme. Register now via telephone or the web. **mu.totalmotorassist.co.uk**

## **Contract advice – before you sign**

Receive professional advice on the terms and implications of any complex agreements via our Contract Advisory Service. Contact your Regional Office to find out more.

## **Partnership advice**

If all the members of your group are already MU members, or decide to join, we can offer free partnership advice and an agreement. Contact your Regional Office for more information.

## **Medical assistance**

The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine delivers specialist health support to musicians. Visit **[bapam.org.uk](http://bapam.org.uk)**

## **Musicians' Hearing Services (MHS)**

MHS offer a top range of hearing related services for MU members. For an appointment, call MHS on **020 7486 1053** or visit **[musicianshearingservices.co.uk](http://musicianshearingservices.co.uk)**

Full details of all the benefits of membership can be found in your MU Members' Handbook.



**Are you due a royalty payment from us for the use of any of your recordings in television programmes, films or adverts? Are you the next of kin of a musician who used to receive royalties from us?**

The Musicians' Union pays royalties to a growing number of musicians for the secondary exploitation of their recordings. In most cases we know which musicians performed on the recording and already have their contact and payment details, so the royalty income can be distributed straight away. However, there is a certain amount of income we have collected that we cannot distribute as we have not been able to identify who performed on the recording; or we do know the names of the musicians but we have been unable to trace them or their next of kin. If you can assist the Musicians' Union with line-up information or contact details, visit **[theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties](https://www.theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties)**. Here, you will be able to find more information on the types

of royalty income we collect, as well as lists of musicians and recording line-ups we are currently trying to trace.

**[theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties](http://theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties)**

## **MU Sections**

To join, contact the relevant MU Official.

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# **Musicians' Union**



**#BehindEveryMusician**