

Disruption and Continuity: Covid-19, Live Music, and Cyclic Sociality

Chris Anderton

The year 2020 was disastrous for the live music and festivals industries. The previous two decades had seen consistent growth, with the business services provider and analyst PricewaterhouseCoopers confidently predicting that the “boom” would continue at least until 2023 when global live music ticket sales were set to exceed US \$25 billion for the first time (Chapple 2019). In the UK, the trade organization UK Music (2019) reported that the live sector was worth £1.1 billion in 2018, supported over 30,000 jobs and attracted tourist spending of £4.5 billion, with all these figures having increased on previous years. On March 11th 2020, all of this changed as the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that a novel coronavirus (later named COVID-19) had spread from an initial outbreak in Wuhan, China to achieve pandemic status. State responses to this news varied, but over the course of March and April numerous countries issued stay-at-home orders to institute national “lockdowns.” This included a ban on “mass gatherings,” defined by the WHO (2020) as “events that could amplify the transmission of the virus and potentially disrupt the host country’s response capacity.” In most countries, such as the UK, this meant the “shuttering” of all live music venues and festivals of any size, leading to the cancellation of tours, and significant economic hardship for those whose livelihoods depend upon the sector; not just the artists, venue owners and promoters, but the extended supply network that comprises it (booking agents, sound and lighting technicians and equipment companies, transportation, catering and so on). Many promoters and venues initially responded with short term plans and the rescheduling of events, but as the restrictions extended, many began to offer ticket transfer options so that

fans could attend re-scheduled concerts and festivals at no additional cost, and the financial burden of refunding ticket income could be reduced.

An indication of the financial impact of the global lockdown was shown in Live Nation's profit postings. Second quarter profits for 2020 were just \$74 million as compared to \$3.2 billion in the same quarter in 2019 (LNE 2020). Furthermore, the sector saw venues and festivals permanently closing down, and job losses worldwide, with major booking agencies such as Creative Artists Agency, William Morris Endeavor and Paradigm Talent Agency all announcing redundancies. Some of the larger firms had the finances to survive the loss in revenue, but it became very challenging for smaller-scale companies and for the many freelance workers involved in the sector. For instance, in the UK it was estimated that around 72% of those working in music, performing and visual arts were self-employed (UK Music 2019), while the Association of Independent Festivals reported that its members had average "sunk costs" (non-recoupable) of £375,000 per event and that the vast majority of festivals were not covered by their insurance policies for the effects of a public health crisis (AIF 2020). Similar figures were seen around the world and were exacerbated by the informal employment status of musicians who found it difficult to access government support, even where this was available. At every level, artists, managers, promoters and others sought to innovate, to develop new revenues streams, and to try out new ways of connecting audiences with music, while also lobbying governments for enhanced financial support. In the UK, music industry organizations ran campaigns with the hashtags #LetTheMusicPlay, #LetUsDance, #SaveOurVenues, #Savenightlife and #WeMakeEvents aimed at securing emergency grants, loans and other support. This led to the UK government creating a "Cultural Recovery Fund" of £1.57 billion (launched in July 2020) that included an Emergency Grassroots Music Venues Fund; the fund helped over 135 venues to survive in

the short term. Other countries were quicker to support their cultural industries, with Germany announcing a €50 billion aid package for the arts in March. However, without a reliable vaccine, or a significant relaxation of social distancing measures through the use of effective track, trace and testing initiatives, the live music and festivals sector could not return to “business as usual” during 2020.

In this chapter I examine some of the innovative responses to the lockdown that emerged in the early months of the pandemic, with a focus on socially-distanced events, the development of the livestreaming and virtual reality (VR) sector, and the growth of illegal raves¹. I argue that the latter presage a return in fortunes for the outdoor music festival sector once the Covid-19 restrictions on mass gatherings are over, and place my analysis in relation to what I term “cyclic sociality,” an extension of my prior work into the outdoor music festival sector (Anderton 2019). Drawing on a range of industry and media reporting, I also discuss the potential for livestreaming to mature into a parallel industry that is complementary to the venue and event-based live music sector. It should be noted that this chapter was written some six months into the pandemic and by the time it is published circumstances will have inevitably changed. However, it is hoped that it will offer a useful overview of the early responses, challenges and opportunities seen within the live music industries during the early months of the crisis.

Socially Distanced Events

¹ Throughout this chapter I use the term “livestreaming” to refer to the online video streaming of live music performances (whether live or pre-recorded).

Around the world, stay-at-home orders and lockdowns were accompanied by advice regarding social distancing and the wearing of face masks or face coverings when in public places (such as shops, public transport and so on). In the UK and Canada, the distance set was 2 meters, though the WHO recommended a distance of at least 1 meter, and there was considerable variation from country to country. When lockdowns started to ease (during May 2020 in the UK), venue owners, promoters and governments began to consider ways in which live events could be staged in a socially distanced manner. For instance, in July 2020, the musician Frank Turner performed at London's Clapham Grand as part of a government-backed initiative. The venue has an audience capacity of 1,250 people, but by following social distancing guidelines only 200 were allowed access to the show. At this level, the concert did not generate enough income to cover its costs and demonstrated that indoor events of this kind were not a viable option. There is, however, the possibility of a hybrid model that could work to a limited extent, whereby "virtual tickets" are sold in order to expand the potential audience. In this model, there is a socially distanced audience in the venue, but also a film crew providing a ticketed livestream of the gig to an online audience (something which I will return to shortly). This model may work for artists with a sizeable following, but is unlikely to be helpful for grassroots musicians or for venues where regular concerts are needed to find profitability in what is a highly risky business even at the best of times.

In contrast to indoor venues, outdoor events offered greater potential for socially distanced models. An initial development was the extension of the drive-in cinema, common in the US and Canada, to include either live performances or specially recorded films of live shows. An example of the latter is Encore Live's *Drive-In Nights* series launched in June 2020, which saw films of Garth Brooks, Blake Shelton, Metallica and others promoted as one-off events in

drive-in cinemas around North America. Similarly, in Denmark and Germany, drive-in raves were staged as early as April and May 2020, with audiences receiving the music via a dedicated radio frequency to their in-car sound systems. In the UK, the picture was more mixed with Live Nation's proposed *Live from the Drive-In* series and the independently run *Drive-In Me Crazy* series both being cancelled due to a change in government policy. The main issue in both cases was that local authorities gained the power to impose local lockdown measures. As a result, Maidstone Borough Council withdrew permission for *Drive-In Me Crazy*, while Live Nation decided it was too risky to proceed with its plans. Despite this, some socially distanced events were staged in the UK and Europe. For instance, a series of concerts was held at the Virgin Money Unity Arena at Newcastle Racecourse, launched by SSD Concerts in August 2020. The site had 500 "personal platforms" (elevated and cordoned-off metal platforms) in socially distanced bubbles of five or six people. Access to the site was via car, with a one-way system directing the audience to their designated platform. Food and drink could be pre-ordered and collected on arrival, or ordered directly to the platform using a dedicated app. An overall audience of 2,500 people helped the venue to be cost effective, though the site itself had a capacity of 20,000 when not complying with social distancing.

Socially distanced events (indoor and outdoor) were at best a temporary measure and were unlikely to be of benefit to live music venues and artists as a sustainable model to be scaled up across the entire industry. For this reason, Melvin Benn (Managing Director of Festival Republic²) called for the adoption of what he termed a "Full Capacity Plan" (Benn 2020). Attendees would purchase a ticket and download the NHS³ track and trace smartphone app.

² Festival Republic is a leading festival promoter in the UK which has Reading/Leeds, Download, Wireless, Latitude and others on its roster.

³ The National Health Service (NHS) is the UK's publicly funded health service provider.

They would then buy a home testing kit and, following processing, would receive an in-app notification. A negative test result would create a time-limited “authority to enter” that could be checked at an event’s point of entry prior to admission. As he later stated to a UK government hearing in September (quoted by Hanley 2020):

Plan A is a vaccine, and a vaccine would be terrific if we had that but we don’t know for definite whether we [will] get it. Plan B which is an absolute certainty is to test everybody and allow everybody who is clear of the virus to enter the venue and work at the venue – and those that are carrying the virus are not allowed to enter.

At the time of writing this chapter, the plan had yet to be piloted, yet the main issues with the plan were clear – it was predicated on the existence of a fully-functional track and trace system aligned with rapid Coronavirus testing, and both of these were subject to considerable uncertainty. Testing (and results) would, ideally, need to be completed within 24 hours of the event itself, yet testing facilities were struggling to meet demand and turnaround times, with results often taking much longer. In addition, regionally-based outbreaks and restrictions were unpredictable, which placed further strain on the system, and led to testing centers limiting access to emergency services and healthcare staff and those people showing symptoms. It is clear that the system would also need to be streamlined considerably for it to be of benefit to smaller and grassroots venues that lack the financial resources of the major promoters, yet perhaps the greatest benefit in raising the plan was to push the UK government into taking different options seriously, and to continue to place the fate of the live music industry closer to the forefront of the policy agenda.

Nevertheless, even if such a plan had been enacted in the UK, there were no guarantees that a local or national lockdown would not be reinstated, that the social distancing guidelines would not be amended, or that the rules and strategies adopted in the UK would match those adopted in other countries. Dealing with each countries' variations would add time and expense to a tour budget, yet promoters were, understandably, seeking to reduce the fees they paid out to artists because of lost revenue during the lockdown, and because of the additional expenses involved in managing socially distanced events or those that could make use of the testing regime outlined in the "Full Capacity Plan." As a result, international touring acts would not find it cost-effective to arrange tours or to deal with the regional variations found from one country to the next. For these (and other) reasons, international tours and festivals reliant on international acts continued to be postponed until 2021 and beyond.

In its planning recommendations for mass gatherings, the WHO (2020) noted that events have "important implications on the psychological well-being of large numbers of individuals" and that they have "substantial political, cultural, social and economic implications." I would like to focus briefly on the social implications in relation to live music events, because these events are more than simply economic transactions affecting the livelihoods of artists, promoters, venues and the supply chains that support them. Socially distanced events (as well as livestreaming more generally as discussed below) are grounded on what might be called the "concert model" of the live music industry, where the motivation to attend is, according to Dave Laing (2004, 7), largely based on seeing and experiencing a particular act. I would argue that the concert experience is broader than Laing suggested, as evidenced by pre-concert fan meets, post-concert after-parties and the prevalence of social media postings both during and after events (livestreams, films, photos, selfies and so on). The 2017 UK Live Music Census demonstrated that spending time with friends, making new acquaintances, and

sharing experiences with others were key motivations for British concert attendees (Webster et al. 2018: 28). These are also key motivators for music festival attendance, yet it is clear that the music festival experience offers much more than this: numerous stages, retail areas, campsites, catering concessions offering food from around the world, and sponsored enclosures that reach far beyond the music on offer (AIF 2018; Anderton 2019a). Festivals seek to foster an atmosphere of freedom and excess that makes them qualitatively different to a concert experience, offering an extended period in which festival-goers can enjoy freedom from their everyday lives and work, and from the social norms of the day. It is difficult to see how socially distanced events such as those described above can meet the same expectations and needs of the music festival experience as it has developed over the last 60 years. As I will discuss later, it is those needs that have driven the growth of unlicensed music events during the pandemic, events which flout the social distancing guidelines imposed by governments across the world.

Livestreaming and Virtual Reality (VR)

In the early days of the global lockdown videos appeared on social media and on the television news showing people singing from their balconies in Italy and using video apps to bring musicians and singers together to create music through the virtual space of the Internet. Professional and amateur musicians performed live on social media, entertaining and supporting their fans, even as their concerts and gigs were cancelled. Television events such as *One World: Together at Home* (broadcast on April 18) brought music from the stars into listener's homes around the world, and there was an optimistic feeling that the lockdown would lift and things would soon go back to normal. As the weeks and months of the pandemic dragged on it was increasingly clear that the "new normal" of social distancing,

face masks and so on was becoming a long-term proposition, leading musicians, music managers and promoters to seek new revenue streams that could help to sustain them while the “bricks and mortar” live music industries were closed down (see also Vandenberg et al. 2020).

A number of responses were seen. For instance, those artists who had archives of recorded material began to release those archives through Direct-to-Fan (D2F) websites such as Bandcamp. Alongside this, many artists offered livestreamed gigs on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook alongside “virtual tip-jars” (sometimes raising money for charities). Others hosted listening parties, online quizzes, DJ sets, and other activities that enhanced their connection with their audiences and pointed viewers toward their websites in the hope of attracting download and merchandise purchases. However, as the Covid-19 lockdown extended, it became clear that livestreaming would need to be monetized beyond the “virtual tip jars,” advertising revenue and cross-marketing associated with the free model of livestreaming.

Pay-per-view (PPV) or “ticketed livestreaming” soon emerged as a viable option available not only for artists at the superstar level, but across the spectrum of music-making. Two main models emerged (though there are a number of variations on these). One involves pre-recording a live performance then later broadcasting it as a time-limited livestream. A good example of this is Nick Cave’s performance recorded at the Alexandra Palace in London in August 2020. By pre-recording a concert the artist can take more time in editing and enhancing the presentation of the video, and they may also be willing to contribute personally to concurrent and/or post-event message boards or video chats. Pre-event message boards and video chat rooms typically open at least half an hour prior to the livestream so that the

audience can talk to each other, helping to build anticipation and excitement for the event to come. In this way, the livestream apes the experience of a bricks and mortar gig where the doors open prior to the scheduled performance time, with friends meeting and chatting together.⁴ Livestreamed concerts also allow artists to play different set-lists, bring in guest musicians, or amend the staging of their concerts from livestream to livestream, thus giving their audiences more reason to attend more than one show⁵. A second model involves real-time live performance, which may also be geo-blocked and scheduled for particular time zones.⁶ Additional live performances may be scheduled for other time zones so that particular live music markets can be more directly catered to. An example of this is Laura Marling, who livestreamed a concert from London's Union Chapel in June 2020 for a UK audience and then performed another concert later that same day for a US audience.

The use of PPV and geo-blocking not only extends the livestreaming ecology to incorporate other music and media sectors, but also helps to create a sense of scarcity; that the audience is attending a one-off show in the same way as if they were attending a venue-based gig, and that the show should be valued in the same way. For this reason, the stream should be taken down after the show is over: if you missed it, you missed out. This can be further enhanced by using fan forums to promote "early bird" discounts (fostering a sense of community and specialness), by selling bespoke bundles, merchandise and collectibles, or by offering VIP benefits such as access to post-event "meet and greets." Some artists will archive the

⁴ Vandenberg et al. (2020) found that concurrent chat channels helped to build feelings of social solidarity and resilience in the electronic music livestream audiences that they examined.

⁵ The variations possible in live performance enhance feelings of novelty and specialness, something which helps to drive concert attendance in general (Black et al. 2007; Brown and Knox 2017), but can be extended in the more flexible space of the virtual concert which is freed further from the logistics of the typical touring model, where the show may be strongly linked to pre-programmed lighting, staging and other constraints linked directly to regular set lists.

⁶ Geo-blocking means that only internet users from particular countries/regions can access the livestream. Geo-blocking and time-zoned broadcasting can also be found in pre-recorded concerts where the aim is the same – to make the show available at a time that is suitable for the intended audience.

livestreamed gigs for rental, streaming or download in much the same way as bands such as Metallica, Pearl Jam and others have done in the past with their “official bootleg” offerings. This provides an extended revenue stream for the artist, with the recording acting either as a souvenir for someone who attended the livestream, or as a way for those unable to attend the show to have access to it.

The emergent PPV market rapidly demonstrated its worth. For instance, it was widely reported that the K-Pop band BTS achieved an equivalent of over US \$20 million in ticket sales for its *Bang Bang Con: The Live* event held on June 14, which was viewed by a worldwide audience (in over 100 countries) and reached a concurrent peak viewership figure of over 756,000 connections (Frater 2020). In Europe, Dermot Kennedy’s *Some Summer Night* performance at London’s Natural History Museum on July 30 attracted over 30,000 paid tickets, making it the biggest livestreamed PPV concert in the US and Europe at that time (Johnston 2020). PPV livestreams are often staged in iconic venues or unusual spaces that are not typically associated with live music performance, such as recording studios and museums. For instance, Ellie Goulding’s *The Brightest Blue Experience* was filmed at London’s V&A (Victoria & Albert) Museum. In this sense, they are an extension of the Sofar Sounds model discussed by Loïc Riom in Chapter 15 of this book. Unlike Sofar Sounds, these concerts are open to as many people as are willing to buy a ticket, yet with close-up filming and interesting staging, they can be create seemingly intimate experiences, as the artist appears to perform to each and every viewer as if they were the only one. Higher quality staging, multiple camera angles, and quality post-production is more likely to be delivered by artists with higher budgets (and subsequently higher ticket prices), but livestreaming technology is cheap and simple enough to be available and beneficial for artists at all levels.

One of the problems that faced the thousands of artists making livestreams available online was how to connect with viewers in the absence of a dominant platform to collate listings for events worldwide. Several ticketing platforms began to list ticketed livestreams, such as Ticketmaster, Songkick and JamBase, but all too often artists found themselves playing primarily to their existing fans. In order to develop and broaden the livestream sector a number of companies began to develop new models. For example, the independent music specialist eMusic.com, which began as a subscription download sales platform before morphing into a hybrid download/streaming site, created eMusic Live in collaboration with the digital music distributor 7Digital. This livestreaming platform allows artists to create fully customizable digital storefronts to promote and sell their music releases and merchandise, embed their livestreams (either directly through eMusic Live or from other video hosting sites), and sell PPV tickets directly to their fans. Artist livestreams are promoted by the platform, which also offers access to detailed analytics. Other new entrants into the PPV livestreaming market are Driift and LiveNow. Driift, created by the music managers Brian Message and Ric Salmon, was responsible for the Laura Marling and Dermot Kennedy concerts mentioned earlier, and focuses principally on the livestreaming of music events. In contrast, LiveNow, responsible for the Ellie Goulding livestream noted above, has a broader programming remit, as it also offers livestreams of sporting events, fitness classes and other entertainment.

Livestreams compete for attention with the by now well-established audio streaming sector, so a further development was the announcement of deals that bring the two sectors together – deals which also bring virtual reality (VR) applications into the equation. VR applications offer immersive digitally created environments that allow users to create avatars in a multi-

user environment, to interact with each other through those avatars, and to choose from a variety of camera angles. These can give close-up views of performers and give a sense of being onstage with them while they perform. Examples of deals that bring together these technologies include TIDAL's investment in Sensorium Corporation (whose Sensorium Galaxy offers VR music and entertainment concerts), the purchase of Napster by MelodyVR (which also has deals with Live Nation, Universal Music Group and others), and Amazon Music's addition of livestreaming capabilities to its primary app through the integration of its video-game-streaming site Twitch.⁷ The connection with video-gaming is important, as those creating livestreaming experiences need to ensure that viewers maintain engagement with the stream and come back for others, and gamification is one method of doing so, such as offering discount incentives, targets and interactivity that encourage viewers to stay involved. This is, however, an area that is still in its infancy within live music streaming, though it has long been a mainstay of video-game platforms.

VR applications are especially interesting as they were at an early stage of market development at the beginning of the global pandemic, but saw a degree of acceleration as the lockdown extended and people sought out new activities to keep them occupied. MelodyVR and Sensorium established Covid-19 secure studios to record concerts and other audio-visual content, and partnered with labels, publishers, games developers and venues around the world. Both companies focused primarily on electronic music and hip hop, as these genres have substantial crossover appeal to the global video-gaming community; a community that is more used to the headset technologies required to make the most of VR systems⁸. In July

⁷ Amazon bought Twitch in 2014, and while it is best known for streaming live video gameplay, it has since become popular for livestream performances and, more controversially, for the unlicensed delivery of audio streams; something that the Artist Rights Alliance has been vocal in condemning (ARA 2020).

⁸ For instance, the video-game Fortnite played host to short concerts by the electronic music DJ Mashmello in February 2019, and by the rapper Travis Scott in April 2020, each of which achieved over 10 million concurrent views within Fortnite alone (plus additional streams on platforms such as Youtube and Twitch).

2020, MelodyVR partnered with Festival Republic's *Wireless Connect* festival (which focuses on rap, hip hop and R&B) to provide a 360° virtual festival, and to help market their VR technology. MelodyVR used their own studio based in Los Angeles (for American artists), and the Alexandra Palace in London to record three days of performances that were broadcast through its own platform as well as on YouTube. However, immersive online experiences do not necessarily require VR, as demonstrated by *Tomorrowland Around the World*, a virtual version of the popular electronic music festival. A virtual festival site was created online using 3D design, which incorporated eight stages, firework displays, laser shows and a range of interactive activities. This would appear to adapt the real-world festival experience yet, as with livestreaming in general it fails to deal with the underlying social experience of attending a festival, of the excitement of being co-present with others in close physical proximity, of watching performances in the open air, and so on. Nevertheless, the developments seen in livestreaming and VR are likely to expand into a parallel industry, as they offer a compelling alternative that does not directly compete with the traditional live music industry; at least, not once that industry has been allowed to open its doors and gates once more.

Illegal Raves, Music Festivals, and Cyclic Sociality

As strict lockdown measures began to be relaxed in the summer months of 2020, we saw the resurgence of the illegal rave sector around the world (Holden and Waldersee 2020). These ranged from relatively small and informal street parties and house parties, through to beach raves, warehouse parties and forest parties attracting thousands of people and organized on a commercial (though unlicensed) basis. The commercial events were promoted through social media and messaging apps, where attendees would sign up and pay for a ticket using a

bitcoin system that would then provide them with travel instructions on the night of the event; in effect an updated version of the premium tariff phone lines that the illegal raves of the 1980s and 1990s had operated through. In the UK, as elsewhere in the world, the police struggled to deal with the sheer numbers of events that were being held; in London alone, there were as many as 200 events reported on some weekends during July and August 2020 (UK Home Office 2020). It is tempting to view these “quarantine raves” as a rebellion against the lockdown, or as young people protesting against authority and the establishment in general, which connects back ideologically and socially to the rhetoric of the raves and free parties of the past (Anderton 2019a: 16–19). They may, therefore, be likened to Hakim Bey’s notion of the Temporary Autonomous Zone – an anarchic, ephemeral and mobile site of transgression that constantly shifts location (Bey 1991). However, as Michael Kill, CEO of the UK Night Time Industries Association told BBC Radio 4, illegal raves grew mostly because youngsters were “socially starved” during the lockdown and wanted a release from the restrictions imposed on them (quoted in Sales 2020). This was echoed by the Berlin-based DJ Elias Doré who felt that “people are just longing to socially connect” at the height of what would have been the European festival season (quoted in Holden and Waldersee 2020).

The hedonistic freedoms and social experience of the festival sector are, as shown by numerous studies, the primary motivational factors for attendance, though they are by no means the only ones (Webster and McKay 2016; Anderton 2019a). For instance, while my research into UK music festivals found that “freedom from everyday life” and “socializing” were two of the primary reasons to attend a festival (Anderton 2019a: 136–8, 143–5), the “search for authentic experience” and “transcendence of the self” were also important (138–43, 146–8), while “socializing” extended, for annually occurring events, into a “sense of belonging”: to the event, the location, and other festivalgoers. It is this sense of belonging

that underpins what I refer to here as “cyclic sociality,” a concept which extends upon that of “cyclic place” which I introduced in my book *Music Festivals in the UK. Beyond the Carnavalesque* (Anderton 2019a). A cyclic place may be described as a space used in “an ephemeral yet recurring manner”; one that is typically (re)constructed on an annual basis by a network of organizers, mediators (magazines, websites, and broadcast media) and festivalgoers who not only co-create the physical presence of events, but also the communally held meanings and experiences that become attached to them (2019a, 125). Festivals that are held over many years develop a coherent “sense of place” (Relph 1976). Returning to an event is a form of homecoming and pilgrimage for regular attendees: “for those few days of its annual existence it is every bit as “real” as any other place a person might visit on an occasional basis” (Anderton 2019a: 126). Yet, it is also one that is imbued with personal meaning. Festivals become part of how people think about themselves, and the activities and memories of a festival become part of their collective experience, as festivals “develop their own histories, behaviours, landmarks, rules and policing” (ibid.). This is what I term as an event’s cyclic sociality – the social meanings, mediations and performativities that come to define the meaning and social atmosphere of an event through their regular renewal on-site, and through informal conversations on social media and between groups of friends. This cyclic sociality may be associated with hedonistic activity such as drug use, or with hedonic consumption practices “that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products” (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982, 92). Contemporary festivals therefore offer a commercialized form of the what Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) termed the carnivalesque: a temporary liberation from the rules of everyday social life in which the world is turned inside out for a period of time and social tensions are released (Anderton 2019a, 19–23). Furthermore, the resurgence of illegal raves can be seen as indicative of a social need for pleasurable collective experiences that are life-affirming, exciting, and part of

who we think we are (see also Ehrenreich 2006). They show that the demand for live music events such as festivals did not wane during the lockdown, despite the growth of livestreaming, VR and other online entertainments, but instead lay dormant. This may explain why so many people accepted the offer from many festivals to honor their existing tickets for rescheduled events in 2021, and why festivals saw their “early bird” tickets for 2021 selling out months in advance.

Conclusion

The live music sector suffered considerably in 2020, and at the time of writing, it seems certain that many festivals and venues will close down for good, leading to knock-on effects for the staff who worked for them and the supply chains that supported them. Socially distanced events fail to deliver the kinds of social experience that festivalgoers crave and are largely impractical for venues at a local level. They have helped as a stopgap measure but cannot provide a sustainable strategy for moving forward. Until reliable and speedy testing and track and trace regimes are in place, or a vaccine has been developed, it is unlikely that the live music industry will recover to its previous level and form. As suggested above, it seems that the festival sector will prove to be more flexible in its ability to adapt, and that it will find an audience ready to return to the fields. The situation is more uncertain for live music venues, and it may be that the corporate promoters gain further market share.

Furthermore, the contraction of the “bricks and mortar” grassroots live sector will make it harder for artists to hone their songs and stagecraft, or to break through in the way that they might have done in the past.

In contrast, livestreaming (including VR) has developed into an important income stream and marketing tool for many artists, and it is likely that it will continue to grow as a sector. One of the benefits of livestreaming has been fan engagement and while Daniel Ek's comment that artists "can't record music once every three to four years and think that's going to be enough" may have attracted condemnation by many artists (Laing 2020), the disruption to the traditional album/tour promotional cycle suggests that artists may need to re-think their approach. Livestreaming fills a void just as well as artist-led podcasts, social media interaction and so on, but can also provide a ready stream of revenue. Several models have emerged, but the PPV pre-recorded time-limited stream might well offer the best outcome: a less risky option that allows for higher production values and for social interaction with listeners in real-time. Integration between livestreaming and audio streaming platforms could also prove beneficial, as livestreaming adds an element of scarcity that audio streaming sites typically lack. Cross marketing between them could also be useful in expanding an artist's fan base, especially where linked to playlists and algorithms that direct listeners to artists and livestreamed events that they might otherwise be unaware of. Unfortunately, the existing hierarchy and inequality seen in the live music sector in the past is likely to be replicated within the livestreaming sphere: artists that have greater financial and promotional support from record labels and sponsors will be able to afford higher quality productions, better marketing, and charge more lucrative ticket prices as a result. This review of the live music sector's early responses to the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that there are always risk-oriented promoters and entrepreneurs looking to enter the market and develop new and innovative opportunities (see also Anderton 2019b), and that the sector as a whole is adapting to the potential benefits afforded by digital technologies in a way that it has not done before. Nevertheless, until the threat of the global pandemic (and actions to combat it) has been dealt with, the traditional touring, venue and festival industries will remain in a precarious position.

Bibliography

AIF. 2018. *Association of Independent Festivals Ten Year Report 2008–2018*. London: AIF.

AIF. 2020. “AIF Warns of Independent Festival Wasteland in 2021 Without Government Action.” *Association of Independent Festivals*, May 13, 2020. <https://aiforg.com/aif-warns-of-independent-festival-wasteland-in-2021-without-government-action/>.

Anderton, Chris. 2019a. *Music Festivals in the UK. Beyond the Carnavalesque*, London: Routledge.

Anderton, Chris. 2019b. “Risky Business: the Volatility and Failure of Outdoor Music Festivals in the UK.” *Live Music Exchange* [blog]. Accessed May 29, 2020. <http://livemusicexchange.org/blog/risky-business-the-volatility-and-failure-of-outdoor-music-festivals-in-the-uk-chris-anderton/>.

ARA [Artist Rights Alliance]. 2020. “ARA Challenges Bezos on Twitch Royalties.” *Medium.com*, August 10, 2020. <https://medium.com/@artistrightsnow/ara-challenges-bezos-on-twitch-royalties-dbbc20f970de>.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and his World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Benn, Melvin. 2020. "The Full Capacity Plan. Health Verification Proposal v0.1."
<https://accessaa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2005291-The-Full-Capacity-Plan.pdf>.

Bey, Hakim. 1991. *T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. New York: Autonomedia.

Black, Grant. C., Mark A. Fox and Paul Kochanowski. 2007. "Concert Tour Success in North America: An Examination of the Top 100 Tours from 1997 to 2005." *Popular Music and Society* 30, no. 2: 149–72.

Brown, Steven C., and Don Knox. 2017. "Why go to Pop Concerts? The Motivations Behind Live Music Attendance." *Musicae Scientiae* 21, no. 3: 233–49.

Chapple, Jon. 2019. "Global Live Music Ticket Sales to Top \$25BN." *IQ-Mag*, September 23, 2019. <https://www.iq-mag.net/2019/09/global-live-music-ticket-sales-top-25bn-pwc-outlook-2019/>.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2006. *Dancing in the Street. A History of Collective Joy*. New York: Henry Holt & Co LLC.

Frater, Patrick. 2020. "BTS' 'Bang Bang Con: The Live' Claims Record Viewership for Online Concert." *Variety*, June 14, 2020. <https://variety.com/2020/digital/asia/bts-big-bang-con-the-live-record-online-concert-1234635003/>.

Hanley, James. 2020. "Melvin Benn: 'Festivals Can Go Ahead Safely with Adequate Testing'." *Music Week*, September 8, 2020. <https://www.musicweek.com/live/read/melvin-benn-festivals-can-go-ahead-safely-with-adequate-testing/081046>.

Hirschman, Elizabeth C., and Morris B. Holbrook. 1982. "Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods, and Propositions." *Journal of Marketing* 46: 92–101.

Holden, Michael, and Victoria Waldersee. 2020. "As Lockdown Eases, Illegal Raves Take Off Across Europe." *Reuters*, June 26, 2020. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-lockdown-parties/as-lockdown-eases-illegal-raves-take-off-across-europe-idUKKBN23X1K7>.

Johnston, Kathleen. 2020. "Dermot Kennedy on Working with Paul Mescal at his Record-breaking Show." *GQ-magazine*, September 4, 2020. <https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/music/article/dermot-kennedy-interview-2020>.

Laing, Dave. 2004. "The Three Woodstocks and the Live Music Scene." In *Remembering Woodstock*, edited by Andy Bennett, 1–17. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Laing, Rob. 2020. "Spotify CEO: 'You can't record music every three or four years and think that's going to be enough'." *Music Radar*, July 31, 2020. <https://www.musicradar.com/news/spotify-ceo-you-cant-record-music-every-three-or-four-years-and-think-thats-going-to-be-enough>.

LNE. 2020. "Live Nation Entertainment Reports Second Quarter 2020 Results." *Live Nation Entertainment*, August 5, 2020. <https://www.livenationentertainment.com/2020/08/live-nation-entertainment-reports-second-quarter-2020-results/>.

Relph, Edward. 1976. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.

Sales, Dan. 2020. "'Socially Starved' Millennials will Simply have MORE Illegal Raves if Nightclubs aren't Reopened, Sector Boss Warns." *Daily Mail* [online], June 25, 2020. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8458615/Socially-starved-millennials-illegal-raves-clubs-arent-reopened-sector-boss-warns.html>.

UK Home Office. 2020. "Tougher Fines Ahead of Bank Holiday to Crack Down on Illegal Gatherings." *GOV.UK*, August 23, 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tougher-fines-ahead-of-bank-holiday-to-crack-down-on-illegal-gatherings>.

UK Music. 2019. *Music By Numbers*. London: UK Music. https://www.ukmusic.org/assets/general/Music_By_Numbers_2019_Report.pdf

Vandenberg, Femke, Michaël Berghman, and Julian Schaap. 2020. "The 'Lonely Raver': Music Livestreams during COVID-19 as a Hotline to Collective Consciousness?" *European Societies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1818271>.

Webster, Emma, and George McKay. 2016. *From Glyndebourne to Glastonbury: the Impact of British Music Festivals*. Norwich: Arts & Humanities Research Council/University of East Anglia.

Webster, Emma, Matt Brennan, Adam Behr, and Martin Cloonan with Jake Ansell. 2018.

Valuing Live Music: The UK Live Music Census 2017 Report, v.11, February 28, 2018.

<http://uklivemusiccensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/UK-Live-Music-Census-2017-full-report.pdf>.

WHO. 2020. "Key Planning Recommendations for Mass Gatherings in the Context of the Current COVID-19 Outbreak: Interim Guidance." *World Health Organization*, May 29,

2020. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-332235>.