

# The Lyrics, The Music & The Money! III

## Study Guide Transcript



*Spring 2026*

*This study guide transcript has been provided to support learners in following the **Way2Learn The Lyrics, The Music & The Money!** course.*

*While the guide serves as a useful resource, we highly recommend that learners watch the course episodes on the **Way2Learn channel** or via the **Video-on-Demand** service to gain a full understanding before completing the answer book.*

*For your convenience, episode times are listed on **page 4 of the answer book**, within the **Way2Learn prospectus** in your library, and in the **quick-glance guide**.*

## Episode 1: The Live Music Landscape

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### Introduction

Welcome to *The Lyrics, The Music & The Money*. In this episode, presenters Dr. Jacqui Norton (Dr. Jacs) and Meg Nichol explore the live music industry, focusing on employability and how the sector functions from the grassroots up. Between them, Dr. Jaks and Meg bring over 14 years of music industry experience, combining music publishing, academic lecturing, West End theatre performance, and TV presenting.

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### **The Current Live Music Landscape**

According to a 2025 report from UK Music, the umbrella organisation that liaises with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), concerts and festivals drew a record 23.5 million music tourists, which was up 23% from 2023 with total spending reaching £10 billion. This boom is largely fueled by major arena tours featuring top-tier artists like Oasis, Taylor Swift, Coldplay, Ed Sheeran, and others. However, the picture looks very different at the grassroots level.

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## The Grassroots Crisis

Small independent venues are disappearing rapidly. In 2023, there were roughly 960 grassroots music venues, and by 2024 that number had shrunk to about 810. Over 40% of grassroots venues operate at a loss, relying heavily on income from food, drink, or other events rather than live music profits. This poses a major problem because grassroots venues act as the "nurseries" where new artists cut their teeth, practise in front of an audience, and learn their craft before reaching bigger stages. Furthermore, touring circuits have become a story of "the haves and the have-nots," with primary and secondary circuits confined to major urban centres like London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, and Liverpool, while once-regular destinations like Leicester, Hull, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Stoke, and Newport have gone quiet.

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### Industry Solutions: The Grassroots Ticket Levy

To counter this, major artists such as Shakira, Frank Turner, Diana Ross, Katy Perry, Mumford and Sons, and Sam Fender have stepped forward, supported by initiatives like *Agents of Change*. They helped develop the concept that arena and stadium shows should directly financially support grassroots venues by contributing a portion of ticket prices. By 2025, 8.8% of tickets at that level contained a version of the grassroots levy, with dozens of artists confirmed for 2026.

Tony Coe, Campaigns and Communications Manager at the **Music Venue Trust (MVT)**, explains that MVT is a charity started in 2014 that protects, improves, and secures the long-term future of grassroots music venues. They provide direct crisis support, advice, and resources, and deliver projects such as:

- **The Grassroots Ticket Levy:** A £1.00 contribution on tickets for arena and stadium shows (specifically over 5,000 capacity) reinvested into grassroots infrastructure and touring.
- **Venue MOT:** Tackling hidden costs that venues lack time to fix.
- **Off the Grid:** Working to produce and eventually eliminate energy bills through solar power.
- **Stay the Night and Feel at Home:** Projects improving conditions for artists by creating accommodation and better backstage spaces.

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- **Own Our Venues:** Run by sister company Music Venue Properties, focusing on community ownership so people can invest in and protect vital venues.

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## Artist Realities and Royalties

Meg caught up with Craig, the drummer of the rock band Mason Hill, at the Underworld grassroots venue in London. Craig noted that COVID-19 closed many venues, and success is no longer measured by physical record sales due to streaming (Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube), but rather by ticket sales and merchandise ("merch") at the door, which is a massive income contributor. Craig humorously shared that being in a band involves a surprising amount of accounting and understanding P&L (Profit and Loss) forms.

For songwriters within a band, registering original music with PRS for Music (Performing Rights Society) ensures they receive royalty payments when their music is broadcast or played live at gigs. Stuart Belsham, Writing Relationship Manager at PRS, explains that PRS ensures songwriter members and music publishers get paid when music is played in public, on radio, via streaming, or at live venues.

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## Grassroots Opportunities and Busking

For those looking to enter the industry, grassroots venues offer hands-on entry-level roles such as runners, hospitality staff, bouncers, ticket collectors, and technical support. Working hard in these roles can lead to unexpected doors opening, much like how a student working behind a bar ended up running for Johnny Marr of The Smiths.

Additionally, busking is highlighted by the Musicians' Union as an exceptional way to hone performance skills and make money. Liam from the Musicians' Union notes that while musicians often maintain a *portfolio career* combining performance, songwriting, and teaching, buskers should check the UK Government website via local postcodes to see if local council licensing laws apply in their area. Dr. Deuce also advises that artists looking to rebuild confidence can start in supportive environments like church choirs, small open mic nights, or by sharing material online, keeping his core motto in mind: "Momentum first, perfection later."

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## Summary

- The Live Music Boom: Major arena tours and music tourism are reaching record highs, generating billions for the UK economy through major superstar acts.
  - The Grassroots Crisis: Independent grassroots venues are closing or operating at a loss, threatening the vital developmental spaces required for new talent.
  - Support and Levies: Initiatives like the Music Venue Trust and the Grassroots Ticket Levy are working to secure structural and financial survival for small venues.
  - Practical Entry Points: Gaining experience through grassroots venues, understanding P&L accounts, registering with PRS for royalties, and utilizing busking or open mics provide realistic pathways into the industry.
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## Episode 2: Climbing the Ladder

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### Introduction

In this episode, Dr. Jacs and Meg examine how artists climb the ladder in the live music sector, looking at early performance opportunities, the value of house concerts, and the essential management and support roles required to build a sustainable career.

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### Starting Out and House Concerts

While online platforms like Instagram and TikTok help promote stories, artists must eventually perform live in front of real audiences to handle judgment and build stage presence. Dr. Deuce, a musician, producer, and educator who has run the Music Tech Training Centre (MTTC) and delivered prison music workshops for nearly 17 years, shares his accidental entry into prison teaching in 2008, where he spent two years with only a whiteboard before a studio was built.

For artists looking for intimate performance spaces outside traditional venues, **house concerts** offer a brilliant solution. Dating back 300 years before modern media, house concerts involve performing in private homes for family and friends. To keep events informal and avoid complex public licensing rules, artists should ask for *donations* rather than selling public tickets. Furthermore, artists should keep 100% of their merchandise profits at these events, which can also provide free accommodation for touring musicians.

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## Building the Artist Team

As an artist grows, they require a professional team to handle the business side of music. John Hart, an artist manager representing a roster of acoustic singer-songwriters on the folk circuit, explains that managing careers involves securing publishing deals, liaising with PRS, and coordinating record deals or self-releases.

- The Manager: Oversees the overall career, acts as the main point of contact, and typically takes around 20% of gross earnings. In the early days, a manager might be a trusted friend or supporter working for little pay while learning the ropes. Organisations like the Music Managers Forum (MMF) offer mentoring and advice for new managers.
- The Promoter: Crucial for local and national events, promoters know their local venues and target audiences intimately to sell tickets effectively.
- The Booking Agent: Brought on board as an artist grows, agents broker relationships with promoters, secure festival placements (domestically and internationally, such as in Australia), and typically take a 15% to 20% commission.

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## The Portfolio Career Reality

Because full-time music rarely pays immediate riches, musicians often live a **portfolio career**. Will from the band *Defences* explains that touring bands often inject personal money monthly to cover van insurance, petrol, music videos, and merchandise. Consequently, musicians wear multiple hats, working in event ticketing, studio engineering, artist consulting, or teaching, to sustain their living costs while keeping their primary music dream alive.

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## Summary

- **Live Performance Growth:** Artists must move beyond social media and test their live performance skills through open mics, busking, or intimate house concerts funded by donations.
  - **The Professional Team:** Navigating the live sector successfully requires building a trusted team consisting of a manager (earning ~20%), a promoter, and a booking agent.
  - **The Portfolio Career:** Early-career musicians frequently balance multiple income streams, side jobs, and freelance roles to cover touring overheads and living expenses.
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## Episode 3: The Road Warriors

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### Introduction

In this episode, Dr. Jacs and Meg shift focus to the "road warriors" and touring crews who make live performances possible. Learners discover what life is really like on the road, the complex logistics handled by tour managers, and the day-to-day realities of working backstage.

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### Touring Logistics and the Tour Manager

Behind every major concert is a massive logistical operation overseen by the Tour Manager, who coordinates travel, accommodation, schedules, and contractual Riders. A rider is an added clause to an artist's contract covering technical stage specifications (lighting, sound, monitors) and personal requests (such as specific foods, scented candles, or dietary allergy requirements). Teddy Prout from the London Philharmonia—an international touring orchestra with 85 players performing everything from Beethoven to film and video game soundtracks (*Fast and the Furious*, *Harry Potter*)—explains that orchestral touring requires meticulous planning across three main areas:

1. Logistics: Ensuring musicians, conductors, and massive amounts of equipment (such as 25 percussion pieces requiring two dedicated trucks traveling across the UK and Europe) arrive at the right place on time.
2. Artistic Planning: Selecting repertoires based on audience demand, conductor specialisms, and avoiding clashes with other orchestras.

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3. Freelancers and Casual Staff: Hiring extra players, stage managers (who move heavy items like pianos quickly and safely under thousands of watchful eyes), librarians, administrators, and venue stewards.

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## The Role of Roadies and Crew

Touring crew members are typically the "first to arrive and last to leave," loading trucks early in the morning and packing down past midnight. Russ Gould, reflecting on a career starting in 1976, explains how crew members start by loading vans for cash-in-hand before advancing to handling cables and packing flight cases.

Key aspects of crew life include:

- Industry Language: Crew must quickly learn specialized terminology to avoid confusion and maintain safety, such as *backline* (equipment behind the artist), *front of house (FOH)*, *XLR* (cable connectors), *auxes (auxiliaries)*, *DI boxes*, and specific equipment names like the SM58 (a standard vocal microphone). If terms are unclear, crew members must always ask rather than guess.
- Being a "Good Hang": Touring involves living, eating, and traveling in proximity for 23 hours a day outside of the performance. Tour managers often sacrifice high technical skill for someone who is easy to live with, adaptable, and respectful, avoiding becoming a "punisher".
- Financials and Per Diems: Crew members earn around national minimum wage levels, supplemented by per diems (daily cash allowances for food and daily needs while away from home).

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## Dr. Deuce on Professional Attitude

Dr. Deuce emphasizes that prisons and the wider music industry reflect everyday society: you will encounter people you dislike. Surviving and winning in the industry requires adapting to personalities, building genuine working relationships, maintaining strict discipline, and being reliable, because raw talent alone will not keep doors open.

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## Summary

- **Complex Tour Management:** Tour managers control intricate travel logistics, financial budgets, and contractual technical/personal riders.
- **The Realities of Crew Life:** Roadies endure long hours, heavy lifting, and demanding physical schedules as the first to arrive and last to leave.
- **Communication and Temperament:** Mastering industry language and being a cooperative, easy-to-live-with team member ("a good hang") are critical for long-term survival on tour.



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## Episode 4: Essential Entry Level Jobs in the Live Music Industry

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### Introduction

Welcome back to *The Lyrics, The Music & The Money*. This episode explores vital entry-level jobs available behind the scenes in the live music and entertainment industry that rely on enthusiasm, reliability, and hands-on experience rather than formal qualifications.

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### The Value of Stagehands and Backstage Roles

Starting as a stagehand or general crew member allows workers to absorb how events are structured and run without carrying overwhelming initial responsibility. Charities like **Second Stage** form a partnership between prison leavers and the UK theatre/live events industries, providing training and work placements in off-stage technical roles (carpentry, set building, lighting, stage management) to address skills shortages. Similarly, **Aspire Oxford** runs social enterprises in painting, decorating, and grounds maintenance to establish strong work habits and self-esteem for individuals overcoming adversity.

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## Sound Engineering Specialisms

Sound engineering accounts for numerous technical roles that develop from grassroots gig experiences:

- **Front of House (FOH) Engineer:** Responsible for mixing sound for the audience.
- **Monitor Engineer:** Responsible for mixing sound for performers on stage so they can hear themselves properly.
- Tom Gitson (FOH engineer for Boomtown's Scrapyard stage and DBS degree programme leader) and Andrew (from Offshore Audio) recommend networking by befriending local bands, helping load gear, shadowing venue engineers during quiet times (like Tuesdays), and building trust until you are trusted to mix a set.
- Dr. Deuce highlights that a good sound engineer makes an artist sound professional, whereas a bad engineer ruins a performance because the audience only hears what comes through the speakers.

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## Earnings and Industry Bodies

- **BECTU:** The UK's largest specialist trade union representing over 40,000 staff, freelance workers, and contractors in media and entertainment.
- **Earnings:** Entry-level crew earnings range from £13 to £35 per hour (daily rates around £295 to £345), while assistant sound engineers earn roughly £20 to £30 per hour (£190 to £400 for a 10-hour day), comparing favorably with skilled trades like bricklayers.

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## Summary

- **Accessible Entry Points:** Backstage and warehouse roles offer practical entry-level paths into the live sector based on enthusiasm and graft rather than academic papers.
- **Technical Engineering:** FOH and monitor engineers hold immense power over how a show sounds to audiences and performers alike.
- **Supportive Pathways:** Charitable initiatives like Second Stage and Aspire provide structured bridges into professional employment for individuals re-entering the workforce.

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## Episode 5: Festivals and Busking

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### Introduction

In this episode, Dr. Jacks and Meg investigate the vibrant world of music festivals and outdoor events. Learners explore seasonal job and volunteering opportunities across the festival circuit, alongside pathways for emerging artists to find their voice and audience.

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### Working the Festival Circuit

Music festivals require massive logistical setups and rely heavily on seasonal and volunteer staff. General crew, stewards, bar staff, and security personnel find work through specialised agencies such as *We Are OPS*, *You Live*, *Fest Festivals*, and *Festival Republic*. Volunteering (such as completing three 8-hour shifts in exchange for free festival entry) allows individuals to experience events like Bearded Theory, save money, and network.

Typical hourly earnings on the festival circuit include:

- **Bar Staff:** £12.00 to £15.00 per hour (supervisors reaching £16.00+).
  - **Security Officers:** £13.50 to £17.00 per hour.
  - **Event Stewards:** £12.70 to £14.15 per hour.
  - **General/Building Crew:** £13.00 to £20.00 per hour depending on skills.
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### Performance Opportunities for Artists

Festivals offer fantastic platforms for unsigned acts to get heard:

- **Glastonbury:** Features the Greenfields and the Leftfield stage, hosting open-air acoustic and open-mic sessions.
- **Unsigned Tents:** Sponsored tents (such as historical PRS-sponsored areas) provide exposure.
- **Specialist Festivals:** Events like the Black Music Festival in Leeds (celebrating 40 years of black music including reggae, rap, and R&B) and Bloodstock (heavy metal showcase) offer genre-specific platforms.

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## Dr. Deuce on Taking Opportunities

Dr. Deuce advises learners to "say yes more than you say no," but to adopt a balanced approach: take on opportunities to learn how things actually work, assess whether they help you grow or meet the right people, and if an opportunity proves worthless or dishonest, drop it with no drama and keep moving forward. Sam, a performing artist, reinforces that playing open mics across towns (performing 15-minute slots seven days a week) and busking with a tip jar build resilience, confidence, and direct agent/promoter connections.

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## Summary

- **Seasonal Festival Employment:** Festivals generate substantial casual and volunteer work across stewarding, bar management, security, and stage building.
- **Platforms for New Talent:** Open-mic tents, greenfields, and regional music festivals provide crucial exposure for developing artists.
- **Pragmatic Opportunity Management:** Success requires saying yes to learning experiences, evaluating their usefulness, and maintaining forward momentum without bitterness.

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## Episode 6: Stepping Out and Future Planning

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### Introduction

Welcome to the final episode of the series. Dr. Jacks and Meg focus on what lies "beyond the wall," examining employability, the power of networking, overcoming past adversity, and how to build a real, lasting career in the music industry.

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### Inspirational Journeys and Mentorship

Guest contributor Nya shares an inspiring story of being incarcerated in 2012, meeting mentor David (revealed to be Dr. Deuce) through the Acme music team, and learning how to mix, master, and engineer. Years later, Nya's dedication earned him a nomination for an A&R award in Los Angeles. This highlights the critical importance of passing on the baton, mentorship, and networking.

For songwriters and poets, the episode highlights the *Toolbox* songwriting framework, prompting writers to explore: Where are you? What do you feel/think? What do you want to say? What holds you back? Keeping lyrics simple also secures copyright ownership and potential monetary value.

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### Support Organisations for Rehabilitation and Re-entry

Re-entering the music industry after time away can be daunting, but numerous organisations provide community, socialising, and support:

- **Finding Rhythms:** Works across youth and adult prisons, forensic units, and probation to deliver powerful music workshops that shift participants' narratives, help release aggression, and build confidence (leading graduates like Joe to university courses at SAE Institute and successful gigs at Peckham Levels).
- **Changing Tunes:** Focuses on music-making and runs the record label Red Tangent Records.
- **Irene Taylor Trust:** Runs *Sounding Out* as a through-the-gate programme for former prisoners, providing paid training, mentoring, and live music performance opportunities.

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- **Choir Initiatives:** Beat Time, Liberty Choir, and the Prison Project Choir (noted for their Waterloo Station music installation).
  - **Sound Futures:** A music industry networking event funded by Arts Council England, hosted in-kind by PRS for Music, connecting prison leavers with professionals across business, well-being, and care.
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## Dr. Deuce's Final Words of Wisdom

Dr. Deuce shares powerful closing advice regarding resilience:

- **What "Not Giving Up" Means:** It does not mean things will go your way, move quickly, or be easy. It means staying in the game, keeping on learning, and showing up even when nothing positive appears to be happening. Progress is quiet and builds invisibly.
  - **Your Past Does Not Disqualify You:** A history of incarceration does not disqualify someone from succeeding; however, a negative *mindset* can. Dr. Deuce cites multiple mentees who went on to handle multi-million dollar global deals, star in *EastEnders*, or achieve #1 UK albums. Conversely, those who tried straddling the line with one foot in the past often returned to jail.
  - **The Formula for Sustainability:** Success requires staying focused, staying disciplined, and being willing to put in hard work day after day to build something real and lasting, rather than chasing overnight success.
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## Summary

- **The Power of Mentorship:** Real-life rehabilitation success stories demonstrate that peer mentorship, funding support, and passing down knowledge can launch award-winning careers.
- **Specialist Support Networks:** Organisations like Finding Rhythms, the Irene Taylor Trust, and Changing Tunes offer vital through-the-gate music programmes and community connections.

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- **Mindset and Long-Term Discipline:** Overcoming past adversity depends entirely on discipline, positive mindset, and staying in the game through Dr. Deuce's philosophy of consistent, sustainable effort.
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