

Written evidence submitted by Henry Baroche

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to express my strongest wishes that the return of music festivals in 2021 be considered among the highest priorities for the music industry recovery programme.

Music festivals, whether solely music based or incorporating other elements such as art, public-speaking, politics, comedy, cooking, are intensely complex and carefully planned affairs bringing together thousands of professionals from a wide range of disciplines. The fact these professionals were unable to work this year was a necessary part of tackling the Coronavirus, but it simply isn't economically viable for individual or industry for a second year running.

From my own personal experience of 2020 under Covid-19, I have lost in the region of £7000 worth of income as a self-employed musician and part of The Magic Teapot festival venue crew. The Magic Teapot is a hand-made wooden festival structure that was due to perform with two separate crews at 20 plus festivals this year in the UK and Denmark, from Glastonbury to the Cheltenham Racecourse event. Some of the crew will have been eligible for self-employed income support, but some, like myself, did not have the required number of years as registered self-employed to qualify.

In addition to the economic factor, the continuation of the current restrictions will persist in the adverse affects on mental health and the long-term health of the creative industries. Many will suffer with depression, a loss of purpose and identity, and a need to urgently retrain, a fact which will be financially prohibitive to many, as well as impossible for an ever competitive job market to sustain in light of the virus.

In short, the festival industry, the numerous industries that sustain it and the thousands of professional who make it all happen cannot cope with another year without income, without their livelihood and ability to exercise their hard-earned trade. And let's not forget the general public and how much of a good time they are owed after knuckling down through 2020!

I sincerely hope you will listen to the vociferous and passionate voice of the festival industry and its creative partners, and work hard to bring back culture with a force across 2021 and beyond.

With kind regards,
Henry Baroche