

#LIGHTS-ON: RECOVERY AND REBOOT IN LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Brainstorm to Help Musicians Pivot

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OVERVIEW

#Lights-On: Recovery and Reboot in Live Entertainment is a series of outreach activities organized by Ryerson's School of Creative Industries, the Toronto Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Foundation, with support from the City of Toronto, Mass Culture, TO Live, Canadian Actors' Equity Association, SOCAN and the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts. The project brings together leaders and experts in business, economics, public policy, public health and arts organizations to begin the important work of supporting the live entertainment sector in its recovery by building issue-specific strategies and practices.



WHERE WE ARE NOW

Live music made up almost 50% of total music industry revenues (World Economic Forum)

"The pandemic has had a devastating impact on artists' ability to perform, to create, and to earn a living from their music," Miranda Mulholland, artist and Chair of the Music Canada Advisory Council.

35% of Canadians say they are listening to more music than before the pandemic started. (Music Canada Study)

Ideas of togetherness and shared experiences have become even more powerful amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The absence of live events has dimmed the vibrancy of a society infused with the work of artists and musicians. Months of self-isolation and physical distancing have created a longing for moments that draw us together to watch, listen, and feel a sense of community.

In these uncharted waters, the entire music ecosystem has scrambled to adapt or die. With venue closures and cancelled tours, "quarantine concerts" have become a lifeline for artists. John Legend serenaded audiences in his bathrobe on Instagram live; while Lady Gaga, Chris Martin and many other stars have performed in live streams to support the global fight against the coronavirus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a wake-up call. The arts economy, already severely weakened by the last 20 years of digitization, must rethink traditional revenue models in order to build future resiliency. This is an opportunity to redefine our long-standing characterization of the "struggling artist."

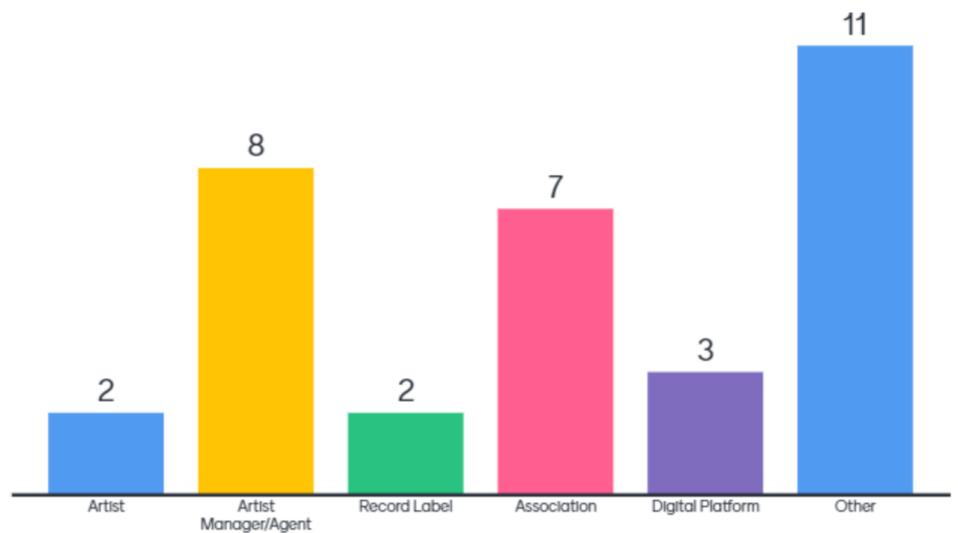
We might lack a contemporary roadmap to help guide us, but we have the creative minds that built the fabric of the industry to steer us.



BRAINSTORM TO HELP MUSICIANS PIVOT

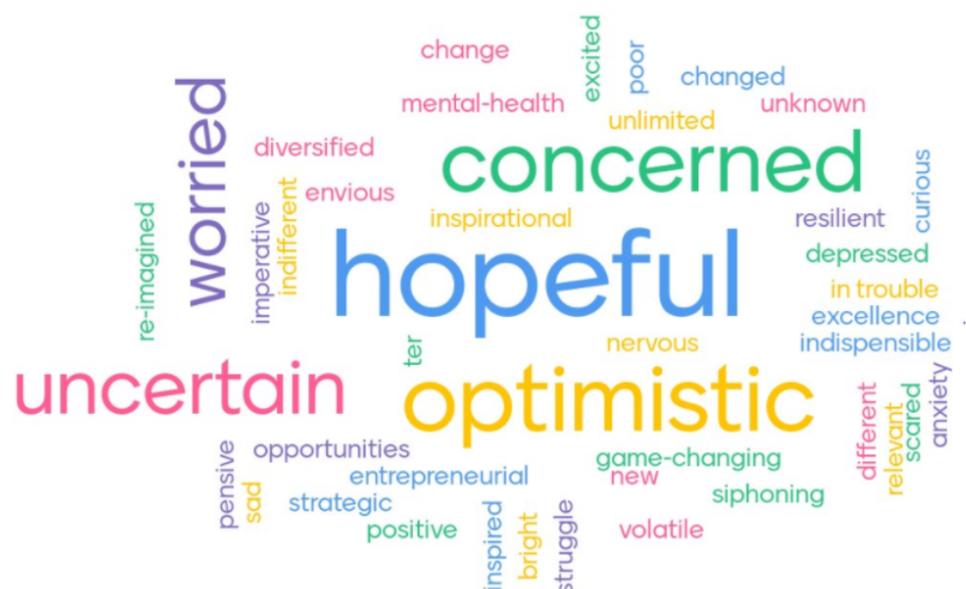
We invited 34 music industry professionals to come together and reimagine how musicians might find success in a post-pandemic world.

A DIVERSE SET OF ROLES



Artists, Music Industry leaders, technology companies, academic faculty, and consultants put their thinking caps on over a Zoom call. Warm up questions on Mentimeter immediately drew attendees into the experience. Questions aimed to provoke individual responses and primed attendees for a series of brainstorming activities.

FEELINGS TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF MUSICIANS



THE PROCESS



The highly advanced, futuristic technology used in our brainstorming activities? The sticky note! Creativity is no longer confined to the collaborative old-school whiteboards; virtual Jamboards let teams work together seamlessly from anywhere in the world.

Industry folks came together in a frictionless and interactive environment. To set-up for success, participants were given a bit of context to emphasize the current climate and concerns for musicians.

Attendees were asked to think of the following question -

HOW MIGHT WE HELP MUSICIANS PIVOT TO THRIVE IN A WORLD WITHOUT LIVE PERFORMANCE?

The following boundaries were set to generate more useful outputs:

- No proposals for Government Grants or Funding
- No mention of live events - no matter how small

Activity #1 gave individuals the chance to introduce themselves to their teams and get comfortable with the Jamboard technology. Activity #2 challenged groups to write as many Post-it note ideas as possible. Teams were encouraged to focus on solutions to the problem rather than implementation. Activity #3 gave teams the opportunity to anonymously vote, improve and select the best idea. Groups were encouraged to select the idea that was most inspirational, connected and relevant.

Inspirational- Ideas should be novel, exciting and easy to understand by someone not steeped in the process of the topic.

Connected- Ideas should meet a real need and solve a real problem.

Relevant- Ideas should be relevant to the original design challenge.

To conclude the meeting, groups came together to share their results and to anonymously rank the 5 most promising ideas.

WHAT WE FOUND

The brainstorm session revealed five main themes: Advocacy, Monetization, Education, Engagement and Partnerships.

EDUCATION

Education can support the entire music ecosystem (Managers, Labels, Musicians, etc.). Workshops can help artists gain knowledge and skills in areas of licensing, promotion, monetization, production, and technology (Ex. virtual production tutorials). Unlocking access to education requires key considerations- infrastructure, policy, inclusion, content and devices.

ADVOCACY

The music sector should advocate for financial support from industries that have an invested interest in the success of artists (Ex. liquor companies / streaming services). Additionally, amplifying online resources will also help artists gain faster access to financial support systems from organizations and community groups.

MONETIZATION

In the absence of touring, artists require high quality live performance footage. In order to monetize their work, artists need guidance when choosing the right platforms to maximize sponsorship and fan subscriptions (Ex. Patreon). Proposed ideas considered online stores for music and merchandise sales, "tip jars" for live stream performances, private online performances, and offering other premium experiences.

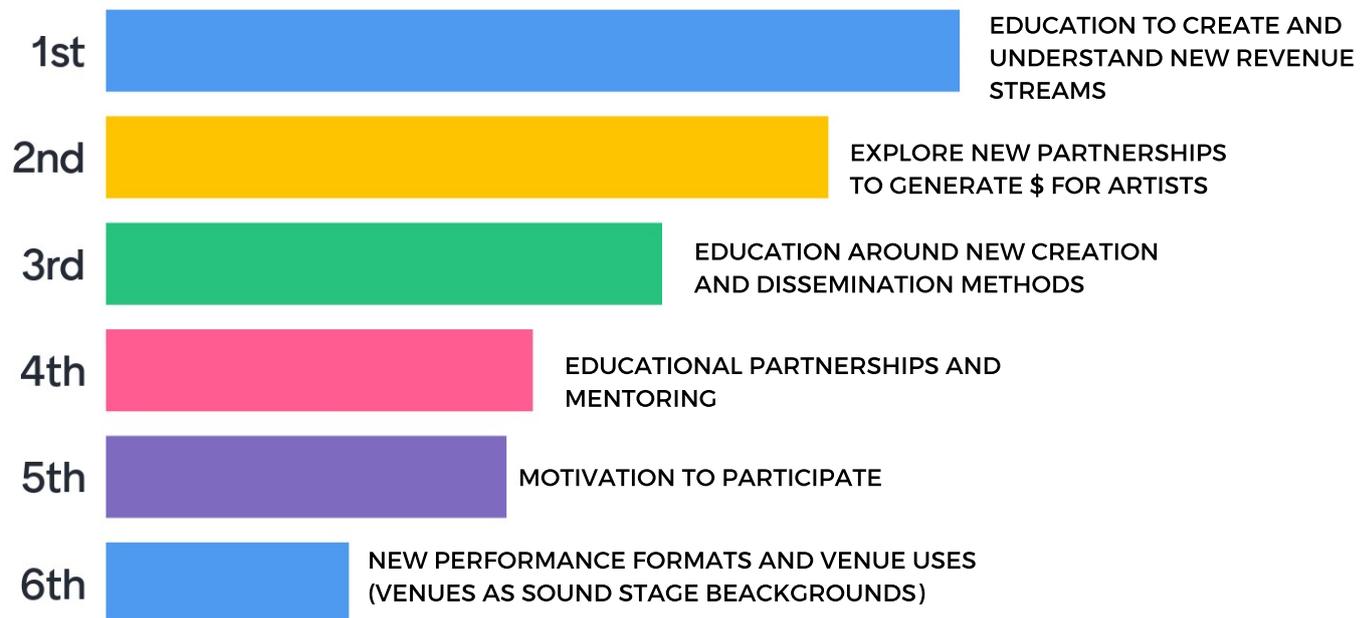
ENGAGEMENT

Creating scalable, in-studio experiences will enable artists to work with live feedback (Ex. SoundCloud's "Fast Track"). New performance formats that engage "passive" fans will better future-proof the industry.

PARTNERSHIPS

Building new partnerships with well-established players in other industries would cultivate opportunities in new music/entertainment verticals. For instance, partnering with the digital/social space (Facebook, Twitter), media companies (Bell, Rogers) or emerging technology (AI, VR).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



RANKING THE BEST IDEAS

All participants anonymously ranked the top ideas from each team. The vote revealed that education to build new revenue streams is top priority. In second position, teams voted for new business partnerships with well-established players in various sectors. Education was highly ranked once again, but with a new emphasis on alternative creation and dissemination methods to ensure more monetizable content. Educational partnerships and mentoring ranked fourth place, followed by motivation to participate. All teams recognized the importance of audience engagement and alternative performance formats which is reflected in the sixth idea - venues as sound stage backgrounds.

IN CONCLUSION

The impact COVID-19 has had on the music sector is multifaceted. The ideal response to the artistic crisis will require input from a variety of sectors. We share these findings as a way to stimulate the necessary support systems and services to help musicians pivot.

THANK YOU

TO OUR PARTICIPANTS...

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