



LIVE MUSIC INDUSTRY RESEARCH

Executive Summary - July 2025

The Context

Grass Roots Music Venues have intrinsic cultural value. They provide shared social experiences. They offer emerging artists their first opportunities, and they stimulate local economies. [The Music Venue's Trust 2024 Annual Report](#) acknowledges a significant decline in the number of grassroots venues, with two closing every month in the UK. It also emphasizes the need for practical interventions and action to address the challenges facing the grass roots sector. CoSTAR National Lab has been working closely with the live music sector to understand the scale of the challenges and to explore how new and emerging technologies could play a meaningful role in supporting grassroots music venues (GMVs) and the artists who depend on them.

Our Research Methodology

In late 2024, CoSTAR National Lab conducted 63 in-depth interviews with stakeholders across live music—artists, venue owners and operators, promoters, managers, stage designers, and other industry professionals. After transcribing the interviews, the team looked for patterns emerging from the data and identified the central themes of concern and interest to our interviewees. These are summarised (in bullet points) below.

In addition, a CoSTAR National Lab workshop brought together 23 stakeholders from across the UK, artists, venue owners and operators and music tech companies, to explore how technological innovation—supported by CoSTAR infrastructure and access to research expertise—could help address challenges to real world problems in support of a more sustainable future for grassroots music. Our full findings will be published in a report later this year.

The Findings

Our consultation revealed key pain points and opportunities for innovation across the live music sector. Interviewees reflected on how they envision the sector's future and where technology and new business models could drive positive change. Their responses coalesced around three main themes.



THEME 1 - Transforming Live

Live performance is no longer confined to one place and time. Stakeholders want tools that expand audience connection and creative possibilities across the fan engagement cycle i.e; prior to, during and after performances. This theme breaks down into several sub-themes:

- Audience agency: Artists want greater control and continuity when engaging audiences throughout the event journey, offering interactive and participatory experiences.
- Audience development: Artists seek closer relationships with audiences through access to data and new ticketing models.
- Personalisation: Engagement can be enhanced at any point through technology—e.g. gamification, virtual elements, or personalised content.
- Inclusive access: Virtual performances are a good way to build confidence for new audiences, discover new experiences, and sample venues before going in person, doing so in a safe way and at relatively low cost.

THEME 2 - Access to Technology

Affordable, user-friendly technology can shift how live music is made and experienced. This theme breaks down into:

- Set-up and portability: Artists need affordable, portable and adaptable technology that can be scaled to work in different venues. They also would benefit from prior access to venues during the preparation stages, and direct access to technical support staff during performances.
- Hybridisation: Immersive and real-time technologies such as game engines can extend performances beyond the walls of venues, connecting shows with audiences remotely.
- Virtuality: Physical spaces can be enhanced with virtual layers, adapted for each show, potentially in response to audiences, for example interactions with digital 'twins' of artists, or digitally 're-skinned' venues.
- Artist worlds: Artists want to invite fans into their creative universes and maintain a connection with them there over time—blending live, digital, gamified, and immersive experiences.
- AI: Ethically designed AI should offer new ways to manage the fan engagement cycle and engage audiences. It can support innovative business modelling and audience interactions with virtual parts of a performance.

THEME 3 - Equitable Ecosystem

A healthier ecosystem demands fairer distribution of value between artists, venues, platforms and promoters. This theme breaks down into:

- Distributed performance and ticketing: Selling to virtual audiences alongside in-person attendees can support venues and artists and widen access to reach new potential demographics.
- Transparency: fairer ticketing models are needed to counteract presently opaque and inequitable payment models —sliding scales, 'pay what you can', or free tickets for newcomers—can help build loyalty and trust. 'Transparent tours' show fans the costs and income from each performance.
- Distributed cooperation: Distributed tools, shared platforms, gamified experiences, artist-led ecosystems and digital wearables may all enable a more direct exchange between artists and fans, strengthening the whole ecosystem.

Our consultation with the live music industry shows a need for new ideas, rethinking how live experiences are created and shared, especially in grassroots venues. This funding call is looking for proposals that use technology to expand what live performance can offer — helping artists and venues connect with audiences in new and lasting ways. One of the strongest messages from the consultation was the importance of building relationships with fans over time. Artists and others want to stay connected with their audiences before, during, and after a show.

This call is a unique opportunity for venues and artists to work closely with technology companies, and via access to technical facilities and research expertise develop creative, innovative and game-changing solutions to the challenges outlined above.

Be the first to hear about our full report due out later in 2025 and sign up to our CoSTAR Network newsletter [here](#).

Sources:

[Live Music Trust Annual Report 2024.](#)

[Grassroots Music Venues, Seventh Report of Session 2023-4 by the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, May 2024.](#)

[Live music, Ninth Report of Session 2017-19 by the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2019.](#)

[Time to ACCT: Providing Creative Industries and AI Developers with a Copyright Framework of Access, Control, Consent, Compensation and Transparency, CoSTAR National Lab report, June 2025.](#)

