

MusicNSW's Industry Essentials

From Load In to Load Out

How to play a live show

So, you've been asked to play your first show! Here are some things you might need to prepare and be aware of.

Before the show:

- + ***Rehearse!*** - Rehearsals are important for all performing artists to combat nerves and give yourself the best chance for a good first impression. You can record your rehearsals to check how you're sounding.
- + ***Check your performance agreement*** - How much is the performance fee? Are there any terms or obligations that are a part of your performance? Get it in writing if possible.
- + ***Promote the event*** - By bringing as many people as possible to a show, you'll give the event organiser, headline band or venue more reason to book you again next time.
- + ***Backline*** - You'll need to let the venue or event organiser know your backline requirements for your performance. This is any equipment you won't bring along to the venue, such as a drum kit, DI and amplifiers. Each venue has a list of equipment available so make sure they have what you need.
- + ***Stage plot*** - For a bigger performance such as a festival, you may be required to provide a stage plot for your band. The stage plot is essentially a diagram indicating how your band likes to be setup on stage - including where each member stands, what instrument and inputs are required. For example, a bass player may have an amp setup (stage right) but also require a d/I (direct input). These types of requirement should be drawn using a simple diagram and explained clearly.
- + ***Input list*** - An input list details everything that is amplified and what channel it corresponds to on the mixing desk. The input list can include how each instrument is amplified - whether by direct input or microphone, and which microphone. It can also include other details such as the type of stand for each microphone, and power details.

Download our **Sample Production Specs** from MusicNSW's [resources page](#) for examples of backline, stage plots and input lists.

During the show:

- + **Merch** - Set up a merch desk or liaise with the event manager to set up your merch if you have any.
- + **Be on time** - Make sure you stick to your given performance and soundcheck times. Being late makes you look unprofessional and can make everyone else run behind schedule..
- + **Soundcheck** - A soundcheck is a technical run through with the band and sound engineer prior to a show. Be friendly and introduce yourself to the sound engineer before soundcheck. Try not to bring faulty equipment - check that your cables and gear are working before you leave home! Your soundcheck will be allocated a limited amount of time so try not to waste time with any issues that can be resolved before you get to the venue. Maintain a line of sight with the sound engineer - they may have to communicate with you visually so make sure you're watching.

After the show:

- + **APRA Performance Report** - APRA AMCOS collects royalties on behalf of artists and bands performing live. Venues and festivals that play music are all required to pay licensing fees that are distributed amongst artists and songwriters. By [filing a performance report](#), you can collect royalties for performing your own songs.

Glossary of terms:

AAA: Stands for Access-All-Areas and refers to an unrestricted laminate pass - most commonly found at festivals.

APRA - live performance returns: APRA, the Australasian Performing Right Association collects royalties on behalf of artists and bands performing live. Venues and festivals that play music are all required to pay licensing fees that are distributed amongst artists and songwriters. As a result, often at festivals bands or tour managers are required to document their set lists so royalties can be distributed accordingly.

Artist Packs: Once an agreement has been reached to perform at a festival artists are generally sent out a pack containing information, playing times, site maps, lanyards, laminates and more.

Backline: Refers to the equipment and peripheral devices bands require to perform live - this generally includes amplifiers, drum kits and so on. Backline does not refer to actual musical instruments. Often bands are required to liaise with production managers to indicate their backline requirements, especially at festivals.

Backstage dressing room: Generally, bands playing venues and festivals are assigned a room where they can store gear, relax and prepare for shows. At some festivals, it is

termed 'Artist tent'.

DI box/ unit: Stands for direct input/ interface. The DI is an electronic device used to connect guitars, basses and so on directly to the mixing desk. For example, a sound engineer will utilise both a microphone on an amp and DI to create a richer guitar tone in a live show, combining both signals.

Door list: When you are booked for a show at a venue you generally receive a limited number of complimentary passes - allowing friends/family and so on to come in free. In most cases the promoter will request you to send in the names of those people whom you wish to have enter free prior to the show.

Door person: The door person generally works alongside the cashier at the front desk and supervises the doorlist.

Drum tech: Refers to the person in charge of setting up and overseeing the operation of the drum kit.

Foldback: Refers to the on-stage speakers used for reference purposes - for example a vocalist will use the foldback speakers to hear themselves sing and make the most of the performance.

Front of house (FOH): Front of House literally refers to the area of a venue or building the audience has access to, in music terms however, it generally refers to the main sound system/ main speakers that cover the audience.

Guitar tech: Guitar techs are in charge of maintaining, preparing, restringing and setting up guitars for shows.

Headline: Headline is the top billed act or biggest band playing at any given show or festival.

Host /MC: At some performances, the promoters organise a presenter to introduce bands, and to hype up audiences.

Laminate: Is the general name given to a band, production or media pass. These passes are most commonly found at larger-scale events.

Line Check: Generally at festivals when a sound check is not possible, bands are required to plug in prior to their performance so the sound engineer can make sure all the various inputs and lines are functioning correctly.

Lineup: The lineup is the list of bands/group playing at a particular show/night.

Merch Desk/ Stall: At most performances bands set up a stall where they can sell their music and merchandise such as t-shirts, badges and other accessories.

P.A.: Stands for Public Address system. It essentially refers to the main sound system used at any given performance.

Plus One: Is a term used to describe an additional pass for a complimentary ticket holder.

Production Manager: Oversees all technical requirements at a live show. This can include but is not limited to staging, lighting rigs and PA setup.

Promoter: Promoter is the person that is organising the show.

Rider: The rider is a set of requests that a performer will set as a criteria for a performance, this often includes beverages, food and other items.

Riser: Riser is a raised platform - in most cases used to lift the drum kit but can also be used for other instruments.

Roadie: Stands for road crew/personnel. Roadies generally handle any part of production including staging setup, tech setups and so on. Often the role will vary depending on band type and profile.

Set list: The set list is a document that lists the songs a performer intends to play at a concert. Set lists are important to maintain continuity and flow on stage and are often used to get an idea of total performance times - specifically when time restrictions are in place.

Set times: Simply put, this is used to indicate band performance time.

Sound Check: A technical run through with the band and sound engineer prior to a show. The sound check is completed to make sure the sound is clear and sitting at the right volume and tonal frequencies before a show. A full sound check includes both a stage sound run-through and front of house (main sound system). Keep in mind that not all shows allow for Sound checks - in particular larger festival shows where many acts are performing.

Sound Mixer/Engineer: The sound mixer/engineer is the technician in charge of operating the sound at a gig. At smaller venues, the engineer will operate both the onstage or foldback sound as well as front of house sound. However, at bigger shows and festivals there are often separate operators taking control of the stage sound.

Stage Hand: A stage hand is a person that assists the stage manager in moving equipment on and off stage and helps with general setups between bands.

Stage Manager: The stage manager has the job of overseeing that show - making sure it runs on time and that changeovers between bands are as smooth as possible.

Stage Plot: The stage plot is essentially a diagram indicating how your band likes to be setup on stage - including where each member stands, what instrument and inputs are required. For example, a bass player may have an amp setup (stage right) but also require a d/I (direct input). These types of requirement should be drawn using a simple diagram and explained clearly. Often stage plots are requested by festival organisers prior to the show.

Tour Manager: Sometimes abbreviated as TM, the tour manager has the responsibility of organising all aspects and logistics surrounding a live performance or performances - this can include such things as accommodation, transport, transfers, riders, backline hire and freight, merchandise and more.