



Europe Entertainment Professionals On 2018: ‘Bring It On!’

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Photo: Michelle Locke via AP

Champagne In Paris - In this Sept. 17, 2017 photo, shows a toast to Paris from the top of the Eiffel Tower. Visitors who make it to the top of the Eiffel Tower can celebrate the view with a flute of Champagne.

Pollstar reached out to a number of Europe’s live entertainment professionals to get their opinions on 2017, as well as a prognosis for next year.

Silvio Huber, head of booking at Austrian promoter Arcadia Live, said that the “many positive and exciting developments in our sector were unfortunately overshadowed by the tragic events in Manchester and Las Vegas.

“Where there’s usually happiness, a great atmosphere and exuberance, we were shown in a cruel way how vulnerable and assailable we are after all. However, it was for precisely this reason that it was nice to experience, how, only a few days later, more than 50,000 visitors and many artists in Manchester sent a strong and positive message to the world.

“This is the message we should all be taking along into the new year. Even if a break-even is not reached for once we should remember what essentially matters, and be glad if our audience, crew, helpers and artists leave a concert feeling happy and healthy.”

Paul Reed, general manager of the Association of Independent Festivals, commented: “There were a lot of positives and progress for the live industry in the UK this year, the most prominent being the ‘big four’ secondary ticketing sites finally being held to account on various levels due to the work of the FanFair Alliance. From Parliament to Google, the pressure has been ramped up and rightfully so. Understandably, there was also a huge focus on event safety and security in the wake of the horrific Manchester Arena bombing.

“In 2018, I hope that we’ll continue to see a diverse festival sector. AIF have raised issues around competition and market share and I fear that major promoter consolidation is only going to increase over the next few years.

“I also hope that the conversation around sexual assault in relation to audiences and staff continues. Our ‘Safer spaces’ campaign highlighted some of these issues, but it was only the beginning of attempting to influence behavior and start to effect actual change.”

Speaking of FanFair Alliance, the association’s campaign manager Adam Webb said: “For FanFair Alliance, 2017 was a solid success. UK politicians and regulators have listened to the arguments around ticket resale and decided – decisively – that things need to change, and the secondary market needs an overhaul if it’s to serve artists and audiences over touts and speculators. As well as new legislation to outlaw the mass harvesting of tickets online, key UK consumer laws have been strengthened; while regulatory bodies including the Competition & Markets Authority, National Trading Standards and the Advertising Standards Authority are [scrutinizing secondary platforms like never before](#).

“And that’s before we throw in [Google’s recent announcement](#) of a global certification scheme, and revelations from the Paradise Papers. Who knew there was such a thing as a StubHub Seller Advisory Council, where high performing ticket touts (sorry...“brokers”) can mix it up with senior executives. Accompanying this, we’re seeing progress in the wider market towards the kind of services that consumers actually want – in other words, the facility to resell their ticket for the price they paid for it. As new measures are activated and enforced in 2018, we anticipate a reigning in of the excesses and abuse of secondary ticketing, and for more progressive and technology-led services to take hold.”

Kevin Thorborne, director of Mojo Barriers, said: “One major theme we’ve witnessed throughout 2017 is that more and more organizers are placing a greater importance on safety, and therefore the quality of the barriers they choose. This year we’ve worked closely with organizers to create more complex configurations for live events such as increased thrusts, secondary and tertiary barriers, and this is something we foresee continuing throughout 2018.

“It’s an obvious observation, but I feel 2018 will be shaped by increased competition within the rental market. From our perspective, [being now part of the bigger EVAGO Group](#), we are excited about the potential investment this will bring.”

Pascal Funke, president one of Germany’s two promoter associations, the VDKD, said it was “absolutely impressive” how Hamburg’s audience has embraced [the city’s new Elbphilharmonie](#), which developed a reputation in Germany, Europe and beyond.

“The concert life in Germany is pleasantly alive, this is not least shown by discussions around and plans for the construction of new concert halls in cities like Munich, Nuremberg and Stuttgart.”

“With that said, the task of developing fair conditions for the secondary ticketing market remains in the coming year,” Funke continued, pointing out that the audience reacted to the black market with increasing indignation, in particular to the phenomenon of concert tickets selling out in no time only to reappear with huge mark-ups.

“Many commercial ticket agents act at the expense of fans, artists and promoters: fans are running into the danger of buying fake tickets from dubious sources, with the result that they are refused entry into the concert. What is more, by purchasing overpriced tickets they often cannot afford to visit more concerts.

“As an association we have provided appropriate guidance to our members, and in addition pointed out the dangers of selling tickets through unauthorized reselling sites online – however, we advocate appropriate legislation as in France.”

Jens Michow, president of Germany’s second promoter association, the bdv, said there were several topics that shaped the association’s work in 2017: a new GEMA contract, the work of Germany’s collecting society for promoters, GWVR, which introduced its first two tariffs and has started collecting money, while trying to sign contracts with both the recorded music and public service broadcasters.

Talks also revolved around the future activities of the newly formed European Live Music Association (ELMA), which is going to represent the German promoters in Brussels going forward; and finally, the escalation of the fight against secondary ticketing and the [merger between the country’s two promoter associations VDKD and bdv](#).

“While the first four points are somewhat business as usual for a trade body, it is going to be exciting to merge the 70-year old VDKD with the 30-year old bdv after two years of negotiation,” Michow said.

“I also hope the users of live recordings are going to come to terms with the fact that a piece of the pie from the exploitation of live recordings, which unfortunately won’t become bigger, belongs to the promoter. And as far as secondary ticketing is concerned our members, during their meeting in November, decided to take action and, in a first step, raise consumer awareness of the risks of the secondary market. To achieve this, we are going to come up with a catchy slogan and then launch a broad campaign. Incidentally, we further strengthened our legal efforts against the secondary ticket trade this year.”

George Akins, CEO of DHP Family: “Terror attacks obviously had a big impact – it’s an attack on humanity and completely wrong that people lost their lives doing something that they love, watching live music. Of course, there was also a business impact – the attacks affect costs and logistics as well as consumer confidence. The effects do seem to have tailed off towards the end of the year, especially with consumer confidence returning.

“However, some venue business rates have gone up. We are also seeing many venues put restoration levies on their tickets with little evidence of any restoration. DHP venues are resisting this measure.

“Secondary ticketing outrage has been there for some time, however this year it feels like it is at a crunch point. There are still no complete solutions. We have been exploring and implementing various methods across our shows to try and prevent secondary touting. We also realise some people want to pass their tickets on at face value and have worked closely

with ticket agents to provide this service. We're proud to have stood resolutely against such practises and to have assisted in lobbying for change. We feel the nimbleness and ethics of a company like DHP Family is on the right side here.

“In 2018 we see corporatization of the festival market threatening fair competition. However, this trend also presents its own opportunities to those who can offer something different.”

Twickets founder Richard Davies said: “The key development in live music over the past 12 months has been the industry as a whole standing up to the secondary ticketing market, which importantly brought about change in legislation around resale. 2018 will hopefully see the strict enforcement of such measures and the gradual erosion of profiteering across the live event sector.”

Scumecck Sabottka, CEO of MCT-Agentur: “2017 has seen steady progress made in secondary ticketing, and we are moving ever closer to a successful pan European approach. In 2018, we need to do more to get rid of corporate touts, protecting artists, fans and the live industry as a whole.”

Stan McLeod, CEO & co-founder of Headliner: “There have been several technologies and initiatives delivered to combat secondary ticketing (Songkick, Live Nation, Taylor Swift, FanFair Alliance) with moderate successes. I would expect to see this continue in 2018 with a wider focus on delivering transparency, enabling talent to have a good overview on what is happening across all aspects of their live output - from booking, to ticketing and contracting.”

Tamás Kádár, CEO of Sziget Festival, told *Pollstar*: “The main issue for us in 2017 is still the rise of artist fees which is hard to follow with ticket prices. The few real headliners, which are to be considered for an international festival like Sziget, are getting more and more expensive and with this it is a real challenge to keep up the quality of the lineup and satisfy the expectations of the European crowd. However, we feel positive about the upcoming seasons as our brand and location is outstanding on the European festival scene.”

Head of NEC Group Arena Sales, Ian Congdon, said 2017's main topic “unfortunately has to be the subject of security. We have always had a very stringent security operation at our venues, but in light of the incidents at live events this year, venues like ourselves and the industry as a whole, has had to review procedures currently in place. There's also a heightened awareness amongst the public, so reassurance messaging of the security measures we have in place continues to be standard practice in our customer communications.

“2018 will be shaped by content – and for the NEC Group Arenas (Arena Birmingham and Genting Arena) alongside concert, comedy and family business which is looking incredibly strong, it's also going to be a big year of sport.

“Playing host to the BBL, Championship boxing, the Yonex All England Open Badminton Championships, British Indoor Athletics and the IAAF 2018 World Indoor Championships to name but a few, it's an opportunity for us to showcase our credentials for hosting world class sport to a global audience.”

Tom Sutton-Roberts, the general manager of London's iconic Troxy, said: “As a music venue, we're really seeing technology making waves within music concerts and working to enhance the experience of attendees. This year we hosted a concert by British rock band, White Lies, which was filmed for VR with the intention of allowing those who missed out on tickets to

experience the concert for themselves. This is certainly a trend that we expect to see rise as more and more bands get on the VR bandwagon.

“We’re also seeing more measures being put in place to combat ticket touts, we’re seeing a lot more ticketing going through Dice to stop touting. This kind of technology is something we expect to see more of over the coming years as promoters, artists, agents and venues all clamp down to prevent touting.

“Whether it be VR concerts, live streaming, geo-targeting, drone technology or phone-free concerts, technology is certainly enhancing the live music scene and improving the customer experience, and as technology continues to develop, we can’t wait to see what the future holds.”

Stephan Thanscheidt, CEO of FKP Scorpio: “We’re looking back with content on an overall very successful year in all business areas, be it festivals, tours or local events. Still, 2017 once again challenged us in the open-air sector with [extreme weather conditions](#), a topic that will certainly be with us going forward, just as the latent threat of terrorism and increased security demands for events.”

Legendary British promoter Harvey Goldsmith CBE told *Pollstar*: “2017 appears to have been the busiest year in contemporary music. The overarching issue, however is the continuing threat of terrorism. Our business is an easy pick for those wishing to damage society. We will need to be more wary and diligent in 2018. Let’s hope 2018 throws up some new global artists that can sustain.”

Another icon in the game, manager Paul Crockford said: “2017 has been a wakeup call with regards to the rampant sexism in the live industry and the lack of diversity across all parts of the business. We should be absolutely sure that the next Harvey Weinstein moment is coming our way. We need to have robust systems in place to deal with it.

“2018 will see yet more rationalization in the live sector and the inexorable growth of the corporate promoter poses the biggest challenge to the live industry going forward. The potentially damaging court case in the US between LiveNation/Tickmaster and Songkick has revealed executives unvarnished opinions about managers and acts who might want to challenge the monopoly position. How that power is exercised will shape the live touring business over the next 12 months and beyond.”

Speaking about 2017, CTS Eventim CEO Klaus-Peter Schulenberg said: “Unfortunately this year we had to acknowledge that concerts, which stand for diversity, happiness and freedom like few other occasions do, have been put in the crosshairs of those that obviously are overchallenged by diversity, happiness and freedom. It makes me very confident that the people are not intimidated by this. Considering the devastating events in Manchester and Las Vegas, I am proud how professionally and quickly we evacuated more than 80,000 people at Rock am Ring in no time in the beginning of June, and particularly, that many fans still raised their voices against terror even in this exceptional situation.

Regarding next year, Schulenberg added: “A less bold prediction: digitalization remains the most important mega trend for our industry – this holds true for music usage as well as ticketing. Streaming and e-commerce are going to continue to profit from this. A more bold prediction: due to the soccer world cup the number of stadium concerts may decline a bit – but this will go hand in hand with a renaissance of clubs and smaller venues!”

Kilimanjaro Live's Stuart Galbraith said: "We have had a great year at Kilimanjaro Group and have toured with many of our fantastic artistes and shows that provided another year of growth for us as a company and also for each one of our music, comedy, digital/YouTube star, family entertainment and eSports promoters.

"Two of the biggest moments in our year however, were: the [acquisition of our shares in Flying Music Group](#) which signifies the next step Kilimanjaro's diversification into musical theatre and touring theatre productions. We look forward to working on expanding Flying Music in 2018 in the wonderful partnership with Paul Walden and Derek Nichol.

"We are proud to be part of FanFair Alliance and fully support the brilliant work that Adam Webb and the rest of the team and the MMF have done in lobbying and pressing Government and the relevant public bodies for the full implementation of Consumer Law, the Consumer Rights Act and the Digital Economy Bill.

"While we wait for the full force of the law to bring transparency to the broken UK secondary market the work that we have done with FanFair Alliance and Claire Turnham at Victims of Viagogo throughout has resulted in fans of Ed Sheeran and other artists who have been ripped off by unscrupulous tout sites being refunded hundreds of thousands of pounds and ourselves then replacing their tickets at face value.

"We hope and believe that 2018 will continue to see progress on the full implementation of UK Consumer law and that the raids on secondary platform offices by the Consumer and Markets Authority and the arrests by made by National Trading Standards of SuperTouts that we have seen towards the end of 2017 will lead to prosecutions and convictions in 2018. This will give a clear message that ripping customers off is no longer acceptable in the UK music industry.

"We hope that this will lead to all secondary tickets sold in the UK to be done so with full transparency and therefore enable customers to make informed decisions on if they want to pay the inflated prices being asked and be aware that a resold ticket will be potentially be invalid at the event."

Solo Agency's John Giddings summed up 2017 with characteristically few words: "Terrorism and Ed Sheeran (not together!!)."

Steve Jenner of Playpass UK and co-founder of the UK Festival Awards already gave a heartfelt speech about the Manchester Attack and the music industry's reaction [at this year's award ceremony](#).

He summed it up once more for *Pollstar*: "For me the defining event of 2017 was the Manchester One Love Concert which I found immensely moving for a number of reasons – obviously the tragic circumstances that inspired it and the compassionate rallying of a whole country around one city in its hour of need, but also because it left me feeling overwhelmed with pride at being part of Britain's live music industry. It reminded me – and the whole world – of the extraordinary power of our industry to step up and overcome the greatest odds to achieve something jaw-droopingly magnificent on an epic scale. Not for commercial gain, just because it was the right thing to do.

"At the best of times it's sometimes easy to forget what originally drew all of us to work in this business. At difficult, unsettling and divisive times like we have seen more recently, it is

all the more comforting, uplifting and galvanizing to be reminded that we have this power in our hands as a united force. I don't know what 2018 has in store but whatever it is, bring it on!"

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