



**THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE
TO HOSTING LIVE MUSIC
EVENTS IN YOUR PUB**

Live music can be a game changer for your pub – bringing in new customers, creating a buzzing atmosphere and setting your space apart from your competitors. This guide will help you ensure you have everything your pub needs to run a successful music night.

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START WITH A CLEAR VISION



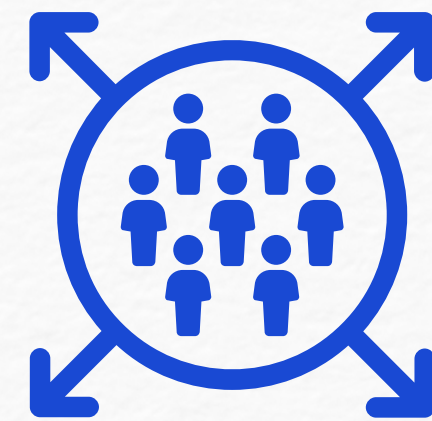
START WITH A CLEAR VISION

Before you kick things off, take some time to think about what you want to achieve. A little forward planning can make everything easier down the line.



What's the goal?

Whether it's filling the place on a quiet Tuesday or creating a regular event that your local community loves, it helps to have a clear focus for each night.



Maximise the space

If you're going to sell tickets to your event, understanding your venue's capacity will give you a sense of ticket pricing and potential attendance. Knowing what works for your space can help you avoid over-promising.

To determine the capacity of your pub, you can consider a number of factors, including:

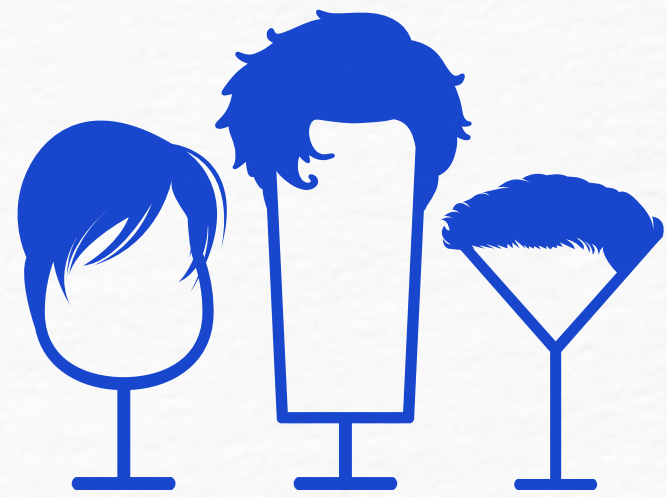
- **Size:** The total area of the venue in square metres
- **Occupancy factor:** The number of people the space can safely hold per square metre.
- **Exits:** The number, width and location of exits, and whether they open inwards or outwards.
- **Fire code:** The fire code limits for the pub, which are based on the layout, size and safety features of the space.
- **Useable space:** The amount of space available for people to use, which can be reduced by the presence of stages or the performance area
- **Standing room:** How many people can comfortably stand in the space.
- **Access to the bar and toilets:** Do you need to keep serving areas and access to the toilets clear?



FINDING THE RIGHT SOUND



Choosing the right music and performers is key to creating the vibe you want. Here are a few things to consider:



Know your audience

Think about what your regulars enjoy. You don't need to book every genre right away – start with something you know will work and branch out as you build interest.



Tap into local talent

Local musicians are a great option, and many are eager to play at nearby venues such as pubs. Use social media and ask around for recommendations to discover up-and-coming talent. You could even connect with local colleges and music schools to find fresh acts.



Community connections

Building relationships with local bands can be a big win. Ask other local venues for any tips and ideas that might help you find performers who fit your space.



Work with promoters

If you're short on time or want to take the pressure off, promoters can help you book acts, arrange logistics and even help design themed events. You can find out more about promoters in your area online.



Lean on useful tech

Platforms like GigRealm streamline the live music booking process by giving venues direct access to artists and promoters across the UK, making it easier than ever to connect with the right talent.

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UNDERSTANDING THE LEGAL ESSENTIALS



Live music nights are a fantastic opportunity for your business to flourish, but they do come with some important legal and licensing considerations. Here's a quick overview but be sure to consult your licensing expert (this may be your solicitor, your BDM, or head office support team) if this is the first time you have hosted a live music event.



Premises licence

Check that your pub's Premises Licence covers live music. If not, you may need a [Temporary Event Notice \(TEN\)](#) issued by your local council. You will need to give 10 working days' notice for a TEN, or five working days' notice for a 'late' TEN.



The Music Licence

If you're planning to host live music nights, it's important to make sure your licence is up to date. If you're adding live music, let [PPL PRS Ltd](#) know.



PPL licence

If you're using recorded music – such as with a DJ – you'll need a [PPL licence](#) to ensure performers are compensated for their work.



Insurance

It's essential to have the necessary insurance in place. You should also check if your performers have their own Public Liability Insurance for added peace of mind.

Other considerations:



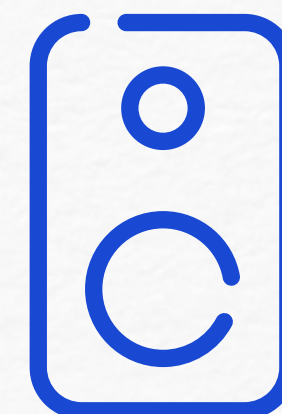
ProDub licence

If your DJs will be using digital copies of tracks, they'll need a ProDub licence. This is their responsibility, but it's worth checking in with them before the event.



Paying performers

Decide if you will be paying your performers a flat fee or offering them a share of ticket sales and/or bar takings. Make it clear if their fee includes a rider (a list of specific food, drink and hospitality requirements for a band or artist) or not. To avoid any awkward conversations, pre-agree on whether payment will be made on the night or at a later date.



Music on tap

Need some background music playing in between acts? There are plenty of jukebox and streaming services available. You can find a list of licensed music providers [here](#).

If you're downloading your own playlists, you'll need the **Commercial Playlisting Licence** from MCPS sold via PRS for Music. This is in addition to **TheMusicLicence** from PPL PRS.



Curfew

Consider any noise restrictions on your licence. This may affect where you stage the event on your premises, noise levels during the performance and what time to set a curfew for the music to stop.



ORGANISING THE BIG NIGHT



Before the event

The right set-up can make all the difference – and it doesn't have to be expensive or complicated



Setting the stage

You don't need a full stage, but it helps to create a dedicated space for performers. Acoustic sets work well in smaller spaces, or you can rent a PA system to get you started. As you host more events, investing in your own equipment will give you more flexibility.



Create a mood

Lighting can change the whole feel of an event. For smaller events, even simple mood lighting can create a welcoming atmosphere. For larger events, think about upgrading to a more dynamic set up.



Building the right team

Depending on how big your event will be, consider whether you might need some one extra in the kitchen, behind the bar or on the door. If you don't have someone in-house, a sound engineer is also useful to have on-hand to avoid any performance issues.

Customer safety

Consider any increased safety risks and take steps to address them, for example you may want to serve drinks in plastic cups rather than glasses.



Ticketing

You might choose to host free gigs as a way to get people through the door and support your local music community. If you do want to charge, here are some useful tips:

Make it a deal

If you're charging an entry fee, think about bundling in a drink or food deal. It's a simple way to make your event feel more special and might even be an added selling point when promoting it.



Consider pricing

Make sure to plan your ticket numbers carefully. You'll want enough tickets to cover your costs including extra staff, security, equipment hire and performers' fees.



Age restrictions

Will you be allowing under-18s into the pub for the event? If so, make sure all staff are reminded to challenge anyone that does not look old enough to be served alcohol and to check their IDs. If under-18s will not be admitted entry, make that clear on your tickets and any promotional material.



Sell tickets online

Online ticket platforms make ticket sales and guest management easier. There are a number of platforms available such as [Dice](#), [WeGotTickets](#) and [Eventbrite](#). You can track attendance, manage a digital guest list and let attendees share the event online. For a smooth entry process, use your chosen app's check-in tool, or a simple stamp system for re-entry.

Spreading the word

Promotion is key to getting people excited and filling up your pub



Online presence

Use your social media platforms to create a buzz and share updates with your audience. Make sure to include key information such as date, times, performers and how to book. You can also create content on the night to promote future events.



Collaborate with your acts

Bands and other performers often have their own loyal followers, so ask them to help promote the event on their channels. It's a great way to reach a wider audience.

Posters and flyers

Print posters with all the important details (venue, date, time, ticket price) and place them in local spots where your target audience will see them.



Digital adverts and email marketing

Running targeted social media ads is an effective way to spread the word and draw more people in.

Build an email list during your events – collecting contact permissions as you do – to directly promote future gigs, share exclusive deals or provide updates.



Local press and music listings

Consider contacting any local newspapers who might be interested to run a story or advertise the event, or may have a listing for local events.

Respect your neighbours

Music nights can be a lot of fun, but it's important to keep the noise in check and stay on good terms with the people living nearby



Noise management

Basic soundproofing or using barriers around the performance area can help keep noise levels down. Simple measures like closing windows and closing external doors can help too. Even after the music stops, consider if there will be noise caused by performers packing up and removing their equipment. If you plan to host regular music nights, investing in soundproofing could make a big difference.



Engage with neighbours

Let your neighbours know when you have music nights coming up and invite them to join in. Offering a night on the house can help build goodwill and keep the peace.



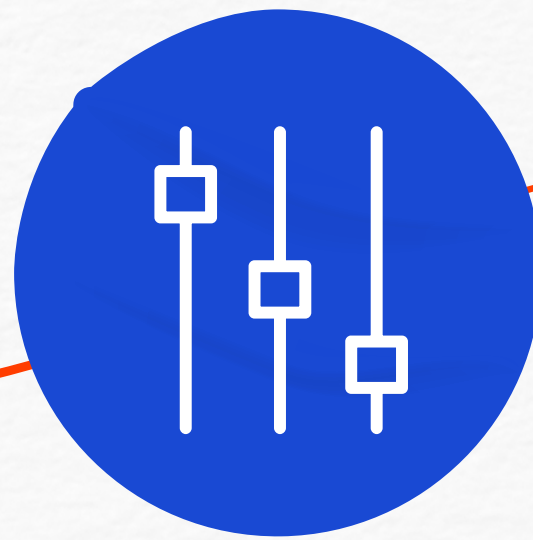
On the day

Organisation goes a long way in making sure everything runs smoothly



Scheduling and timing

Think about how you want to structure the night. Typically, the headliner should go on last to keep the energy high. If it's feasible, create a space for performers to relax, and make sure everything's set up ahead of time. Consider what time you want the performance area set up and performers to arrive – you may want this to be done before opening.



Soundcheck and coordination

Where possible, give your performers time to soundcheck, and coordinate with your sound engineer (if you use one) to ensure everything is ready to go.

Be present

Being active in your pub shows your customers and performers that you're invested in the event and gives your bar, kitchen and security staff a clear picture of who to report to. It's also a good way to spot any issues early on.



After the event

Wrapping things up well leaves a great impression for next time



Prompt payments

Paying your performers and staff quickly helps maintain your reputation as a reliable music venue, which can lead to more interest from bands in the future.

Gather feedback

After the event, ask for feedback from customers and performers. You'll get valuable insights that will help you improve for next time.



Celebrate your success

Enjoy the success of your event! Take a moment to appreciate what you've achieved and then start planning for your next one.

With a little planning, creativity and attention to detail, you'll be well on your way to hosting live music nights that become a regular fixture at your pub.

PUBS

