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**WILL AI MAKE
THE SHOW
BETTER**

for the audience?

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That was the question at the heart of a recent The BACK LOUNGE discussion, where our Director of Marketing Richard Turrell was invited to join as a guest speaker to explore the impact AI is already having on live events and touring. We'll leave Richard to explain...

AI in live, where do we start? It's a contentious topic but this isn't just about the future anymore, it's already happening. And while much of the public discussion around AI focuses on whether jobs will disappear, supported by polarised opinions of good vs. evil and optimism vs. deep fear, the more interesting question is whether AI (when I say AI I mean ethical AI) can improve the live experience for audiences, artists and crews.

If it can help create better shows, safer productions and more sustainable careers, then it's worth paying attention to. If it simply becomes a tool for reducing costs without improving outcomes, then we need to ask tougher questions.

The reality is that AI is already being introduced into many areas of live events. Production paperwork, advances, crew communications, travel planning, inventory management, reporting and administration can all be streamlined using AI-powered tools. But it still needs a human to validate the output because one small error can unravel a show... or tour!

In sound, it can support system optimisation, room analysis, troubleshooting and workflow automation. A tool like De-Feedback is a great example because it doesn't replace a skilled FOH engineer but can improve the live experience by removing unexpected feedback faster than it could be corrected manually.



Human judgement is still the premium skill.

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the discussion was that AI can support decisions, but it doesn't own the outcome. When an artist walks on stage, they aren't putting their trust in software, they're putting their trust in the people around them.

That trust also relies on transparency. As AI becomes more embedded in workflows, people need to understand how the tools they use are built, how data is handled and protected, and whether those systems are being developed in ways that support rather than undermine the wider industry. Without that visibility, trust becomes much harder to earn.

AI tools and platforms can help people work faster and smarter but it doesn't replace accountability, when something goes wrong, artists and management teams still look for a person, not a platform.

But would an artist trust AI to run the show?

As AI capabilities improve, it's a question the industry will increasingly need to consider but at the moment many people are comfortable with AI supporting a show, far fewer are comfortable with AI running a show.

The audience are unlikely to know where AI is assisting the show but would an artist trust it with their performance and would a promoter trust it with their event if there was no contingency plan? For now, there is still the expectation of a skilled professional sitting behind the technology.

trust & governance

are now cited as the key barriers to scaling AI adoption.

source: mckinsey.com

How lean can crews become?

AI is often positioned as an efficiency tool, but over efficiency creates another challenge. How lean can teams become before risk starts to increase? If AI allows one person to manage tasks that previously required two or three people, it makes commercial sense to reduce headcount.

But what happens if critical knowledge sits with one person and one system and they leave midway through a tour or a software licence becomes 10x more expensive?

The live events industry has always relied on teamwork, and resilience when things get tough, it's a lot more difficult to stay resilient and creative in isolation. The danger isn't necessarily AI replacing people, the danger is creating single points of failure.

If AI is here, what should freelancers be investing in?

One of the most common questions during the discussion was what skills people should be developing now. From what we are seeing, the freelancers most likely to thrive over the next five years will be those who combine technical expertise with:

- AI literacy and tool awareness
- Strong documentation and workflow management
- Human judgement and decision-making
- Commercial confidence and pricing discipline
- Adaptability and continuous learning

The value is increasingly shifting from simply completing tasks to understanding, validating and owning outcomes.

64%

of venue & event professionals believe AI will transform the industry

source: gomomentus.com

84%

of people used AI in the past 6 months, but trust still lags behind confidence

source: ey.com

EXPERT VIEW

This was a genuinely thought-provoking discussion, with questions and comments from voices within the touring and 'live' community, as our sessions always are. Alongside understandable concerns about how AI might affect our jobs in the not-so-distant future, others shared how they are already using AI to enhance the work they do which provoked an interesting discussion!

Particularly insightful for me, was the recognition and willingness by those working in this industry to be adaptable and to look beyond some of the usual fears AI poses, so we can explore where it can add value, and where we may go to next. There's no doubt AI is here to stay, and its how we use it ethically and with considered judgement that's key.



Suzi Green
Founder

The BACK LOUNGE

The BACK LOUNGE community primarily encompasses music touring and live events crew and artists, but is open to anyone working in the wider events industry including management, booking agents, venue staff, security and so on.

It's a peer support group with the aim of pooling resources and supporting each other in maintaining positive physical and mental health within what sometimes feels like a crazy industry.

healthy-touring.com/the-back-lounge

Compliance & Connectivity

AI compliance may soon become as familiar to the industry as health and safety, insurance and visa requirements.

Tour schedules, artist movements, personal information, financial data, unreleased content and security plans are sensitive information. Freelancers and employers alike need to understand what data can be shared, where it is being processed and which tools are approved by clients and organisations.

There is also the reality of global touring. An AI tool that is approved and accessible in London may not be permitted, available or compliant in Berlin, Shanghai or other locations on the same tour. Regulations, data residency requirements and platform availability can vary significantly between countries so you need to regularly audit the AI tools you use, verify where

and how data is processed, and maintain a clear log of approved systems, usage and compliance checks throughout a tour.

Another practical consideration is connectivity if any of your AI tools or platforms rely on cloud infrastructure and remote processing. That works well until you are faced with unreliable venue networks, festival sites, overloaded Wi-Fi and poor connectivity.

If an AI-enabled system requires a stable internet connection to function, what happens when that connection drops or the platform experiences an outage? Do you have a backup system and could an event (with or without AI support) run without an internet connection?

Asking someone on stage to tell the audience the gig is over because you've lost internet is going to be a tough sell.

Will AI make the show better for the audience?

The discussion left me optimistic, but not in the breathless, everything-changes-tomorrow kind of way that usually surrounds conversations about AI.

This isn't the first time technology has been a disruptor. Compared to previous tech advancements (digital consoles, virtual soundchecks...) AI feels bigger, certainly.

But standing in a venue and watching a crowd react to a moment on stage, it's hard to imagine software replacing the instincts, trust and split-second judgement that make live events work. What it can do is clear some of the noise and help you make faster decisions with better information.

How can AI give you more time to spend on the things that will be memorable whilst AI deals with the BAU. And that is where the real opportunity lies.

When the lights go down and the show begins, is AI helping to create a better experience for the people in the room? That's the question that really matters.

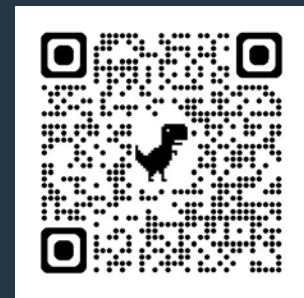
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ABOUT HANDLE FREELANCE SOLUTIONS

Headquartered in the UK, the Handle group was founded in 1978 and our heritage, passion, and specialisms are rooted within the media and entertainment industries. Handle Freelance Solutions was established in 2014 and has become the preferred payroll solution for an impressive base of Media, Entertainment and Fashion brands.

We are proud to be specialists and do everything we can to make sure that onboarding, pay and compliance will never stop great brands and freelancers from being creative. www.handlefreelance.co.uk

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