



## White Paper

# The Future of Street Performance (busking)

A best practice guide for embedding street performance in public spaces

Written by Found in Music | Busk in London  
Featuring a case study by the City of Austin



**Music &  
Entertainment**  
CITY OF AUSTIN  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Busking is the world's largest talent platform. Musicians and artists have been performing on streets of cities and towns around the world for centuries. They continue to do so but as cities (and towns) have evolved busking has begun to face increasing problems in many places. Increasing residential development in busy hubs and the increasing general noise levels of traffic (which buskers have used amplification to compete with) have changed the environment.

In addition the rise of cashless communities is threatening the traditional revenue model of busking.

This paper takes an in depth look at the busking landscape in London, England and presents best practice and the new technology that is being harnessed to futureproof street performance. Also included is a case study for government promoting street performance through private partnerships in Austin, Texas.

It examines:

- i. The Busking landscape**
- ii. Successes and challenges**
- iv. Place-making and economic benefits**

The objective of both these case studies is to provide insights towards a best practice model that can be replicated by other cities and towns around the world.

The ultimate aim is to ensure that street performance (busking) is protected,

recognised and respected as an asset that brings value to both the public and private sectors. It is one of the most cost effective ways of bringing vibrancy to streets and public spaces, attracting footfall, increasing dwell time and helping encourage local spend.

Key recommendations:

1. Bring all stakeholders together so they have a voice in street performance decisions (performers, local officials, police, residents, businesses, land owners)
2. Establish a simple set of rules – a Buskers' Code – that shows what best practice looks like
3. Build a busking community of exciting talent that can self police itself and take a pride in their community
4. Expand the busking network by creating new performance pitches on private land
5. Raise the profile of busking – street performance is cool. Many big names started off busking and recognise the value of honing skills in this way. You never know who is watching

Surveys show that the majority of the public think busking is an asset to a public space. It animates the environment, provides entertainment, increases dwell time and therefore benefits the area economically and makes the area feel safer.

So it's vital that we protect and nurture this street performance art so that it is a futureproofed part of our environments.

# Part 1

## **BUSK IN LONDON**

### Street Performance in London



SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**

## BACKGROUND

### WHAT IS BUSK IN LONDON?

Street performance is known as *busking* in many areas of the world and is legal on public land in the UK.

In response to an increase in busking related complaints a new street performance initiative titled **Busk in London** was launched in 2015 by the Mayor of London. It had the backing of performers, landowners, local authorities and other key agencies.

The objective was to make London the most busker friendly city in the world.

Busk in London set out to make busking easier so that young talent could get involved. It tackled misconceptions about street performance and drove a PR campaign to champion it as a valuable asset. It encouraged local authorities to help it to thrive rather than trying to regulate or extinguish it from public spaces.

Busk in London grew out of GIGS, the Mayor of London's successful annual busking competition for young musicians. Now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year GIGS continues to act as a significant talent development platform and is held in high regard by the music industry.

It is a scheme supported by the Mayor of London and managed and delivered by Found in Music, a UK based experiential agency.

Busking brings great economic and place-making benefits to London but there are challenges. This means the scheme is constantly evolving and innovative.

2.5 million people see a live music performance on the streets of London during the GIGS summer busking competition

86% of tourists say they enjoy seeing buskers on London streets

Busk in London programmes over 7,000 hours of street performance on private land

## BACKGROUND

### THE PROCESS

#### *Step 1 – Laying the Right Foundations*

We brought all parties to the table to put together a Buskers' Code to address basic relations between performers, businesses, police and residents. We then create a single Code of Best Practice and a website as a central busking resource so all relevant information was in one place.

#### *Step 2 – Creating the Circuit*

We encouraged public and private landowners to open up spaces where street performance can take place. Our priority is to provide as many performer opportunities as possible by working with all parties. This enables our talent to earn a living.

#### *Step 3 – Changing Perceptions*

We created International Busking Day in 2015 to help drive positive PR around street performance. We recruited Busk in London ambassadors such as Nile Rodgers, Seal and KT Tunstall to help celebrate busking.

Busk in London makes it safer and easier for a new generation of performers to take up the art of street performance, whilst providing a framework for stakeholders and clarifying the landscape for performers.

We have made London the most busker friendly city in the world. No other city provides this level of performer support and opportunity.

### EXPANDING THE CIRCUIT

We work with private land owners to create performance opportunities in high footfall locations.

For example, we schedule 360 hours of performances a week for Network Rail.

This helps animate train stations concourses across 9 high footfall mainline train stations such as Waterloo, Paddington and London Bridge.



## SUCSESSES

Working with private landowners has been the key to opening up land for street performance in London.

We work with a large variety of landowners, including the following -

- Network Rail
- Transport for London (London Underground)
- Apple stores across London
- Battersea Power Station
- Wembley Park (Quintain)
- The Ivy restaurants
- Camden Market, Spitalfields Market
- More London (British Land)

### DELIVERING DIRECT EARNING OPPORTUNITIES & VALUE TO THE PERFORMER COMMUNITY

We deliver over 6,600 hours p.a. of new performance opportunities on our private land busking schemes.

+

Professional development via master-classes and workshops

+

reducing barriers to entry

The ratio of male to female performers is still unequal on public land (typically 80:20) On Busk in London private land schemes it is 50:50 and we are proud of the work we have done to achieve this more balanced roster. Female performers feel safer performing on Busk in London pitches



## REPOSITIONING STREET PERFORMANCE

We have worked hard to raise the profile of busking in a positive way. Busking is an art form and often just one part of a performers' portfolio. It is a highly effective way to hone live performance skills, test new material and build audiences. We have used two methods to do this:

### 1) **Busk in London Ambassadors**

International music stars, broadcasters and emerging artists stepped forward to support the important work we've been doing to protect and champion street performance. Our ambassadors include Nile Rodgers, Seal, Passenger, KT Tunstall, Fatboy Slim, Jack Savoretti BBC radio presenter Abbie McCarthy

- 2) Events such as **International Busking Day** and **Gigs**. International Busking Day is a global celebration that we developed to champion street performance. Our streets and public spaces are alive and kicking throughout the year, so we created a day to really shout about this. Performers across 6 continents now take part in International Busking Day - from Sydney to Reykjavik, Tokyo to Rio. Public spaces are filled with music, magic, comedy, physical theatre, living statues and dance. We mark them on a giant map in London as they pop up on social media across the day with the **#InternationalBuskingDay** hashtag.



## **BUSKING LANDSCAPE IN LONDON**

### **Public vs Private Land**

#### **PUBLIC LAND – CHALLENGES**

Busking on public land is legal in the UK. However, busking on public land is under threat from gentrification and councils wanting to enforce licensing and Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs).

#### **PLACE-MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To nurture a high-quality thriving street performance scene on public land, we recommend implementing a common-sense Buskers' Code drawn up by all parties – performers, local council, police, residents and businesses. This should form the basis of creating a harmonious positive relationship between performers and their surrounding environment.
- Busking is not a general nuisance that needs to be controlled. But in some cases, there may be a small minority of performers who fail to follow the code. Existing legislation can be used to address these problem performers.
- We do not recommend the introduction of licensing or Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to address excessive levels of noise, nuisance, annoyance, danger of risk of harm or injury caused by street entertainment activities to residents and businesses. These are all covered by existing laws. Introducing

a PSPO is unnecessary and conveys a very negative message regarding street performance.

- Some cities and boroughs have considered (or have temporarily attempted) the licensing or PSPO route. We have yet to find one that thinks it was the solution to any busking related issues. This is because it is far too costly and labour intensive to implement and police a regulated scheme on public land. In practice, unlicensed performers still perform on public land even when a licensed scheme is in place. Because officers are not present at all times to monitor and enforce it.
- Research carried out by Busk in London over 4 years, showed that most busking complaints actually relate to a small handful of performers and complainants. It is more effective to target individual complaints than blanket punish the busking community as a whole. Welcome and encourage new talent to perform on your streets. This will dilute the few problem performers that might exist.
- It became clear that the best performers will only busk in pitches where they can earn money. However, with London fast becoming a cashless city the traditional cash business model of street performance was impacting performers incomes. We realised that we needed to find a digital solution in order to ensure the future of street performance.



## THE FUTURE OF STREET PERFORMANCE

### The Digital Tipping Solution

In May 2018, Busk in London became the world's first busking programme to launch a one step repeat contactless payment initiative. A partnership with fintech company iZettle allowed buskers to receive repeat contactless payments.

With fewer people carrying cash, Busk in London and iZettle's partnership aims to increase the contributions buskers receive. Londoners can now tap-to-pay street musicians across the city using contactless or wearable technology via iZettle.

We launched this bespoke technology initiative at Waterloo station with the help of busking champion and international singer songwriter *Passenger* (photo below). Coverage went viral globally with over 200

pieces of media coverage.

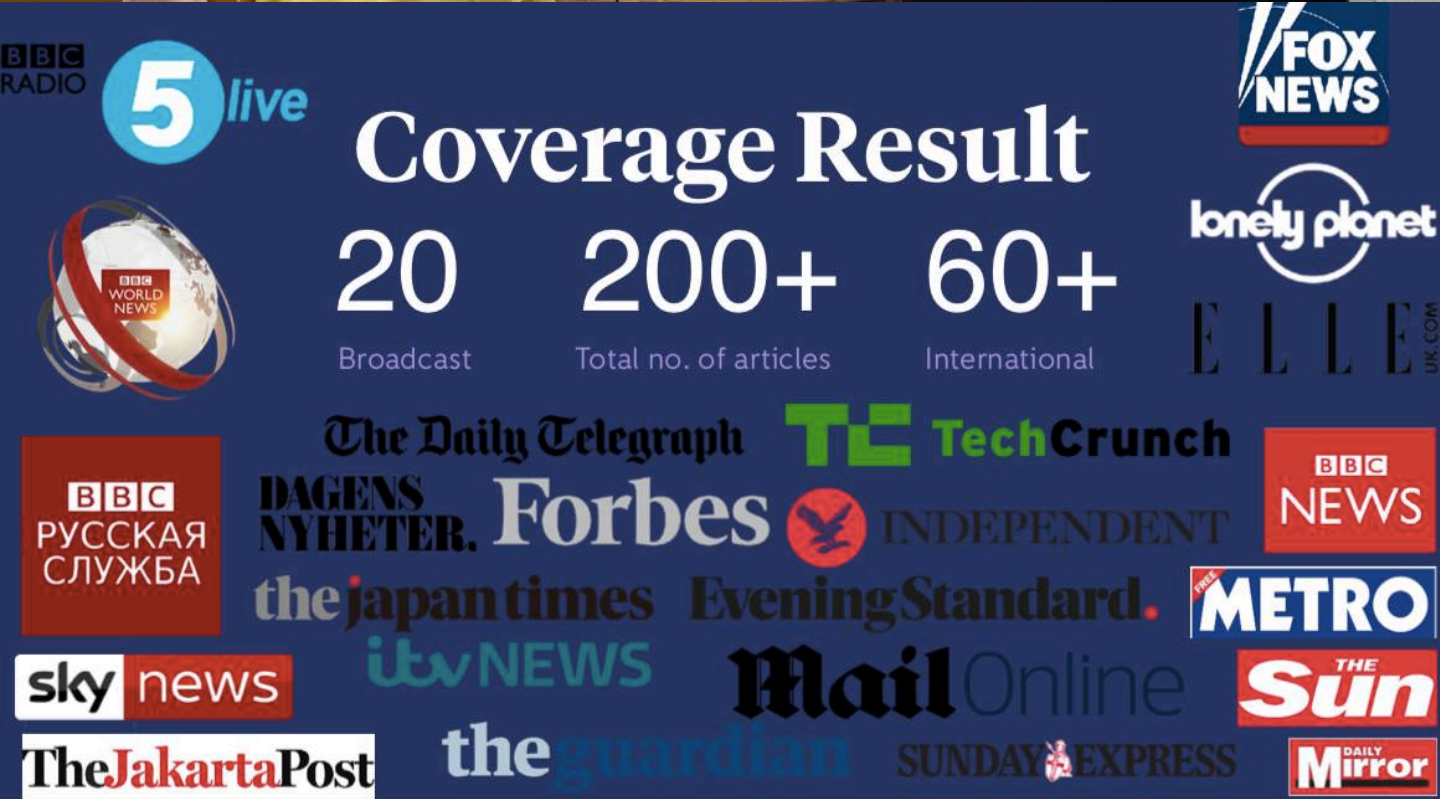
To enable this contactless technology to fit the street performance model it was necessary to develop a new coding patch. This enabled performers to set a tip amount (e.g. £2) and keep the payment unit awake while they were performing.

This meant that passers by could simply tap their payment card on the contactless unit to tip in one instant step. Prior to this software patch the contactless tipping units didn't really suit the busking model. Because performers had to set up the unit each time someone wanted to tip them with a credit or debit card. The new innovation resulted in a seamless one step digital tipping solution.

Buskers are now widely adopting these new iZettle contactless payment units across London and can benefit from a discounted price when bought through Busk in London.







## Part 2

### **CASE STUDY**

### **CITY OF AUSTIN**



**Music &  
Entertainment**

CITY OF AUSTIN  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

## BACKGROUND

Austin, Texas has been known for the last 20 years as the Live Music Capital of the World, however, the practice of street performance has dwindled over the last decade.

In 2018, the City of Austin's Music & Entertainment Division (MED), housed within the Economic Development Department, set out to address how the City of Austin can support musicians through a Street Performance Pilot Program.

The catalyst for this pilot was \$150,000 earmarked by a downtown developer to assist in the activation of a downtown development's open space. The funds were designated to infuse live music into these new spaces over the course of 5

years, bringing the opportunity to revitalize and encourage the practice of street performance across the city.

### Objectives:

- To compensate musicians through the City's MED to support street performances
- provide additional revenue streams to local Austin musicians
- draw downtown residents and visitors to newly opened public spaces and buildings within the development through public music performance
- learn the best methods to potentially expand the program to additional areas within Austin
- provide opportunities to increase live music performances that support Austin's Music Friendly Community designation by the Texas Music Office.

City of Austin  
Music & Entertainment Division

# STREET PERFORMANCE PILOT PROGRAM LAUNCH

**March 10, 2018**

12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Starting at City Hall Mezzanine,  
201 W. 2nd Street, and continuing  
through the Green Water  
Treatment Redevelopment District

Programming Funded by:

### Performances by:

12-12:30 p.m. **ATLAS MAIOR**- City Hall Mezzanine

12:40 p.m. **MOON TOWER BRASS BAND**- City Hall Plaza  
over to Green Water Redevelopment District

1 p.m. **REY ARTEGA**

2 p.m. **DICKIE LEE ERWIN**

3 p.m. **KATE PRIESTLEY**

4 p.m. **COLIN GILMORE**

Music &  
Entertainment



## PROCESS

The decision to launch this program as “Street Performance” as opposed to “busking” is because of the musician compensation structure of the program. Each musician who is confirmed to participate receives \$150 for the 1-hour acoustic set. This rate of compensation is a standard rate by the Music & Entertainment Division whenever musicians are engaged to perform on behalf of the City. Because musicians are not asked to rely on tips from passersby the program is referred to as a “Street Performance.” Additionally, this program focuses solely on musicians as opposed to other forms of performances that are

typically covered under the umbrella of the term “busking.”

An online application was posted to the MED website with questions from band size to genre. Interested musician applicants were asked for examples of music performance through social media or musician web pages. The application period was open for four months, and during this time MED received over 600 applications from musicians interested in participating in the program—reinforcing both the desire within the music community to engage in street performance, as well as, the need for fairly compensated performance opportunities for the music community.





## OUTCOMES

Throughout the course of the 6-month Street Performance pilot, MED booked and compensated 206 musicians across a wide spectrum of genres. These efforts directed almost \$30,000 toward local Austin musicians, and 34% of the musicians who applied to the program were accommodated.

Additionally, the Street Performance Program began the process of normalizing the practice of street performance in new sections of downtown Austin helping local

residents acclimate to experiencing live music in their everyday lives.

During the duration of the program, and since the completion of the pilot period, the Music & Entertainment Division has fielded interest from other developers in Austin interested in incorporating similar programs into new projects.

The City is currently evaluating how this program will sustain over the next 4 years in its current site, as well as how the program might scale to be available to other new investors and sites.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **HOW TO SUPPORT STREET PERFORMANCE IN YOUR CITY**

### **1. Involve everyone**

Bring all stakeholders together so they have a voice in street performance decisions (performers, local officials, police, residents, businesses, land owners)

### **2. Create a framework**

Establish a simple set of rules – a Buskers' Code – that shows what best practice looks like

### **3. Build a busking community**

A strong group of exciting talent that can self police itself and take a pride in their community

### **4. Expand the opportunities**

Increase the busking circuit by creating new performance pitches on private land

### **5. Raise the profile of busking**

Street performance is cool. Many big names started off busking and recognise the value of honing skills in this way. You never know who is watching. It's a credible performance art and a good revenue generating opportunity for performers.

### **6. Harness new technology**

Cities are quickly becoming cashless. If performers do not earn enough money on the streets they will stop performing on the streets. Embrace new technology to help them generate cashless income.

## ABOUT THE CITY OF AUSTIN MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT DIVISION

The City of Austin Economic Development Department's Music & Entertainment Division (MED) is highly engaged in developing and executing initiatives that help accelerate the growth of the music industry infrastructure in Austin.

We accomplish this by serving as an industry liaison focusing on job creation, musician compensation, talent export, and industry revenue growth.

MED provides the following programming and services to the Austin community:

Programming: Develops and executes programs that aim to foster the success and development of Austin's local musicians, live music scene, and music industry sectors. Musician compensation and professional development are the two main areas of focus.

Entertainment Services Group: The Entertainment Services Group creates and manage policies, tools, and partnerships that promote unique, vibrant, safe, and well-planned live music and nightlife experiences in Austin, while promoting venue preservation and sustainability.



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## ABOUT FOUND IN MUSIC

We are leading experts in the use of music in business strategy.

We're currently advising the NHS, UK Government, Mayor of London/Greater London Authority and a roster of cities/regions/businesses.

We help them recognise that solutions to many of their problems can be found in music.

- Place making
- Skills learning and employee engagement
- Tourism / Profile
- Social cohesion
- Economic growth
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Workplace design and employee engagement
- High street regeneration

We also help to deliver the recommendations and music plans on the ground.

Contact us to talk about how you can embed these principles to drive greater economic and social returns in your region.

### Contact

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*Photos: Rupert Caney, Kois Miah Photography and City of Austin Music & Entertainment Division*

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

We regularly speak at conferences and events and contribute to several publications and Boards:

- *Music in Society* (inquiry conducted at the House of Lords examining the value of music in economic development, education and public health)
- *Education Task Force* (part of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Artificial Intelligence advising UK Government on future workforce considerations)
- *Music is the New Gastronomy* (United Nations white paper on music tourism and economic growth)
- *Busk in London* (we have managed the Mayor of London's ground breaking street performance task force and scheme since 2015)
- *The Future of Street Performance* (white paper co-written with City of Austin and to be published at SXSW Festival 2019)
- *Exchange: Music in Workplace Design* (published by MAKE Architects)