

FESTIVAL STATS AND STUDIES · COMMON MYTHS · AUGUST 2026

Eight things they tell you *to get you in line.*

The rest of this study counts what gets booked. This page checks what gets *said* about it — the claims made to artists and agents about legacy names, headliners and where the money comes from. Each one is set against a primary source: the trade press, the peer-reviewed literature, Form 990 filings, a state enforcement action, an on-the-record interview, or the festival’s own bill. The figure quoted most often turns out to have no source at all.

0 published sources anywhere for the claim that legacy artists generate 80% of festival revenue	35.8% of festival attendees are primarily motivated by the lineup, measured directly
<1 sec for Newport Folk 2026 to sell out with zero artists announced	66.5 median age of the eighteen artists this circuit is built on

CLAIM 01

WHAT THEY SAY

“Eighty per cent of our revenue comes from the legacy artists.”

The figure has no source.

It is stated with the confidence of a metric. It is not one. Searched, August 2026: Pollstar, Billboard, *IQ*, *Music Business Worldwide*, the peer-reviewed events and cultural-economics literature, ticketing-company research, and the published material of every relevant industry association. **No study, trade report, ticketing dataset or promoter disclosure anywhere in the public record contains it.**

The only 80% figures that surface in festival research are unrelated — the share of first-time attendees at certain events, the share of attendees who buy food on site.

This matters because of where it puts the burden. A promoter making a specific quantitative claim about their own business is either reading it off a report or they are not. There is no report.

The first question in the room is not “prove me wrong.” It is “which system did that number come out of?”

CLAIM 02

WHAT THEY SAY

“We know which artist sells the tickets.”

Not with the product they sell.

To attribute revenue to an individual artist you need either single-day tickets tracked against lineup announcements, or purchase-intent data captured at the point of sale. Most of the events in this study sell neither.

- Seabreeze sells a four-day general-admission pass at \$350–\$399, and reserved tiers from \$650 up to **\$10,500 for a table of ten**. The product is the weekend.
- Coachella has sold three-day passes only since 2010. There is no single-day option, which makes a per-artist revenue split arithmetically impossible there.

- Glastonbury sells full-weekend tickets only. Bonnaroo sold four-day passes only for most of its history; single-day tickets were listed from 2024.

When the product is a weekend, nobody knows which artist sold it. The top-billed name is credited because it is the name in the largest type. That is a fact about the poster.

This is the same mechanism the rest of the study documents from the other side. The legacy act receives the top billing, the marketing spend, the press-release headline and the Saturday-night slot. The weekend then sells. The sellout is booked to the legacy act. The support artist was never placed in a position where they could have been credited with anything. **The variable was never manipulated, so the result cannot be read.**

CLAIM 03

WHAT THEY SAY

“The lineup is what sells the ticket.”

Three research groups have tested it. It does not hold.

STAR LINEUP IS A NON-SIGNIFICANT PREDICTOR

Leenders, van Telgen, Gemser and van der Wurff (2005), *International Journal on Media Management* 7(3–4), modelled festival success against content variables — audience scope, **lineup**, festival age, theme — and format variables — budget, ticket price, location, capacity cap — across 47 music festivals.

Budgets (and star lineup and ticket price), theme, and location are largely nonsignificant predictors of success.

LEENDERS ET AL. (2005), ABSTRACT

What did predict attendance growth was being relatively new and having a narrow, defined niche. Stated with its limits: one study, $n = 47$, Dutch market, 2005, and the abstract’s parenthetical suggests star lineup may have been grouped with budget in the model. It is one study. It is one more than Claim 01 has.

MOST ATTENDEES ARE NOT THERE FOR A SPECIFIC ARTIST

Bowen and Daniels (2005), *Event Management* 9(3), ran on-site intercept interviews ($n = 374$ valid) and cluster-analysed the results into four attendee segments.

SEGMENT	SHARE	MUSIC MOTIVATION (OF 5)
Just Being Social	13.4%	2.08
Enrichment Over Music	36.4%	3.21
The Music Matters	35.8%	4.32
Love It All	14.4%	4.86

Only 35.8% fall in the music-primary cluster. Across the whole sample the Enjoyment factor scored 4.19 against Music at 3.70. The Music factor explicitly included the item “*this year’s musical artists have a special appeal to me*” — the lineup-specific question was asked directly, and it still landed in the minority.

It is risky for event managers to rely on the music itself or a specific artist to draw large festival crowds. Equally important is creating a fun and festive atmosphere that offers ample opportunity to socialize.

BOWEN & DANIELS (2005), ABSTRACT

STAR POWER DOES NOT EXPLAIN THE MONEY

Connolly and Krueger, *Rockonomics: The Economics of Popular Music* (2006), analysed 232,911 Pollstar box-office reports covering 270,679 performances, 1981–2003. They confirm extreme concentration — the top 1% of artists took 26% of concert revenue in 1982 and 56% by 2003. Then they test whether star power explains it.

The return to superstardom has indeed increased over time, but that the timing does not coincide with the increase in ticket prices. He concludes that we must look at other factors to explain the rising prices.

CONNOLLY & KRUEGER (2006), SUMMARISING KRUEGER (2005)

SAY THIS ONE PRECISELY

Krueger does **not** find that star power is worthless. He finds that the rise in the return to superstardom does not line up in time with the rise in ticket prices, so something other than star power is driving the revenue growth. He is also frank about the difficulty: “*we are skeptical that current methods of measuring talent will shed much light on the superstar model.*” Overstate it and a well-read promoter takes the whole page down with it.

One Krueger finding worth keeping in the pocket, because it is about this genre directly: “from 1996 to 2003 concert prices increased by only 20 percent for jazz musicians, but by 99 percent for rock and pop performers.”

CLAIM 04

WHAT THEY SAY

“You can’t sell a festival without a legacy headliner.”

Festivals sell out before naming anyone. Festivals with the biggest names alive collapse.

This is the claim that falsifies most cleanly, because it makes a prediction and the prediction fails in both directions at once.

SOLD OUT WITH NO LINEUP ANNOUNCED

- **Newport Folk 2026** sold out in under one second, on sale 4–5 February 2026, with zero artists announced. Same pattern the year before.
- **Glastonbury 2025** sold out in 35 minutes, months before the lineup was revealed. The 2024 edition sold out in under an hour; site capacity is about 210,000.
- **Coachella**, per Pollstar, March 2025: “in many of those years, the tickets sold out on on-sale, weeks before the line-up was even announced.”

THE SCALE OF THE FAILURES

Pollstar counted roughly **90 US festivals shuttering in 2024**. Music Festival Wizard logs 89 confirmed cancellations that year, about 107 in 2025 and 47 by August 2026. The UK’s Association of Independent Festivals recorded 78 cancellations in 2024 and 43 in 2025, and **at least 253 UK festivals lost since 2020**. These counts do not record the composition of each event’s lineup.

CANCELLED CARRYING THE NAMES THE CLAIM SAYS ARE DECISIVE

EVENT	ON THE BILL	OUTCOME
Lollapalooza 2004	Morrissey, Sonic Youth, PJ Harvey, Flaming Lips, Pixies, Wilco	All 16 dates cancelled before opening night on slow sales

EVENT	ON THEBILL	OUTCOME
Woodstock 50 (2019)	Jay-Z, Miley Cyrus, The Killers, Dead & Company, Santana	Cancelled; the financier had committed up to \$49.1m and withdrew about \$17.8m from the festival account
Splendour in the Grass 2024	Kylie Minogue	Cancelled 27 March 2024, about a week after on-sale
Soundside 2025	The Killers, Hozier, Weezer, Vampire Weekend	Cancelled July 2025
Blue Ridge Rock 2023	Slipknot, Megadeth, Pantera	About 60,000 attended; the final two days were cancelled; refunds were unpaid as of April 2024

Whatever is carrying festival revenue, it is demonstrably not the identity of the headliner. It is the brand, the date, the trust and the room.

CLAIM 05

WHAT THEY SAY

“There’s no evidence current artists can carry a jazz festival.”

There is one place the experiment was actually run, and the artistic director published the result.

Christian McBride, as artistic director of the Newport Jazz Festival, deliberately raised the current-artist share of the bill — Samara Joy, Julius Rodriguez, The Roots, Khruangbin, Cory Wong — while keeping living legends on it. He then discussed the finances on the record with Ashley Kahn in *DownBeat*, 20 August 2024.

McBride: *The most obvious thing is that this is Newport’s first full, three-day sellout — selling out all tickets in advance — since 1969.*

Kahn: *So, the box office covers the costs of the festival?*

McBride: *It surely did this year! It's gotten better each year. Up until last year the jazz festival broke even... We went into the black for the first time last year, and of course this year is the first time we've had an advance, three-day sellout from what I've heard in 55 years.*

DOWNBEAT, 20 AUGUST 2024

Into the black in 2023. First advance three-day sellout since 1969 in 2024. Sold out again in 2025, and again in 2026 — the 2026 sellout under a new artistic director, Nate Smith, in his first season. McBride on the method: “You gotta go out on a limb and book people who you know people need to see... Look at somebody like Samara Joy or Julius Rodriguez.”

STATE THIS CAREFULLY OR LOSE IT

Newport did not go legacy-free. Herbie Hancock headlined 2026. And McBride’s “up until last year we broke even” describes recent years, not all fifty-five. The defensible claim is not that legacy artists are unnecessary — it is that **the festival’s first profitable year and its first advance three-day sellout since 1969 both landed during the period it increased its bet on current artists.** McBride’s own framing is the model: “We will always have the primary directive of booking these living legends, but the focus is also to build legends for now and in the future.”

THREE SUPPORTING CASES

- **We Out Here** (Dorset, UK), a bill of almost entirely young and UK jazz artists: sold out of weekend tickets in 2025 for the fifth consecutive year, with its largest ticket sales to date.
- **Big Ears** (Knoxville), curator-driven, no arena legacy headliners. Attendance and economic-impact figures are not given here because they could not be traced to a primary source.
- **Robert Glasper’s Blue Note residency:** a 33-night, 66-show residency, 1 October to 7 November 2021. A working current artist booked for a month-long run at a single club.

CLAIM 06

WHAT THEY SAY

“Booking a new artist is the risk.”

The roster is an actuarial position with a median age of 66.5.

Birth years for the active core of the touring roster, ages computed at August 2026.

ARTIST	AGE	ARTIST	AGE
Bob James	86	Russ Freeman	66
Jay Beckenstein	75	Keiko Matsui	65
Jeff Lorber	73	Boney James	64
Peter White	71	Jonathan Butler	64
Rick Braun	71	Marion Meadows	64
Gerald Albright	68	Euge Groove	63
Najee	68	Norman Brown	63
Kirk Whalum	68	Dave Koz	63
Marcus Miller	67	Brian Culbertson	53

Median 66.5. Mean 67.3. Seventeen of the eighteen are 63 or older. The roster has been thinning for a quarter century: Grover Washington Jr (d. 1999), Wayman Tisdale (d. 2009, aged 44), George Duke (d. 2013), Joe Sample (d. 2014), Chuck Loeb (d. 2017, aged 61), Nick Colionne (d. 2022), David Sanborn (d. 2024).

If Claim 01 were true, it would be the most alarming fact about the business, not a justification for its booking policy. A revenue model resting on eighteen people with a median age of 66 is not a strategy. It is a countdown.

AND THE LEGACY-HEAVY OPERATORS ARE THE ONES IN TROUBLE

- Berks** — the most legacy-dense contemporary jazz lineup in America, and the subject of [its own volume](#). Its parent, the Berks Arts Council, filed FY2024 revenue of \$1,849,270 against expenses of \$2,135,018 — a net loss of **\$285,748** — and announced in July 2026 that it would cease operations after fifty-five years. The festival continues under a new nonprofit, Berks Jazz Fest, with Boscov’s CEO Jim Boscov; its 36th edition is scheduled for April 2027.
- Capital Jazz** — the deepest legacy R&B roster on the circuit — is the subject of a Maryland Attorney General consumer-protection action, with at least 103 consumers owed at least **\$642,240** for a cancelled 2026

SuperCruise and an alleged violation of a June 2025 settlement.

- **Long Beach Jazz Festival** cancelled its 36th annual in August 2025. **Fillmore Jazz Festival** announced a postponement to 2026 for lack of funding, then went ahead on 5–6 July 2025 after new sponsorship.

The stable events on this circuit are stable because of non-ticket subsidy, not lineup. Detroit Jazz Festival runs a \$4.5–5m budget underwritten by the Valade endowment. Jacksonville is municipally funded and free.

CLAIM 07

WHAT THEY SAY

“Our audience wants the legacy artists.”

The programming produced the audience. The NEA has been measuring it since 1982.

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts is the only rigorous longitudinal data on the American jazz audience.

MEAN AGE OF THE LIVE JAZZ AUDIENCE

YEAR	MEAN AGE
1982	33.1
1985	35.2
1992	39.6
2002	42.6
2008	45.2

AGE COMPOSITION (UNCORRECTED SERIES)

	1982	1992	2002	2008
Under 35	67.0%	42.8%	30.7%	29.2%
60 and over	5.5%	11.9%	12.9%	17.5%

Jazz is the most dramatic example. In 1982, two-thirds of its audience was under the age of 35; by 2008, the fraction had slipped to three-tenths.

MARK J. STERN, NEA RESEARCH REPORT #53

Jazz aged 12.1 years in 26 calendar years, going from the youngest benchmark arts audience in America to merely average. The attendance rate followed: **9.6% of US adults in 1982, 10.8% in 2002, 7.8% in 2008, 8.6% in 2017, 6.3% in 2022** — the lowest figure recorded in the survey series. And across 2002–2012 the largest increase in jazz attendance rate was among 55–64-year-olds, from 8.8% to 10.0%. Every band under 55 declined.

THE OBVIOUS COUNTER, AND THE ANSWER

A promoter can turn this around: *the audience is old, so book old artists*. That reading has the causation backwards, and this study is the reason why. An audience does not age because of taste. It ages because nothing renewed it — and the volumes here document, event by event, exactly how little renewal there was. **The 2022 participation rate is the receipt for thirty years of that policy.**

CLAIM 08

WHAT THEY SAY

“We book the smooth jazz legends because that’s the format.”

Their own posters say otherwise.

This one is checkable in thirty seconds on a phone, which is what makes it useful. The biggest names on the 2026 contemporary jazz festival posters are largely not legacy smooth jazz artists at all.

- **Seabreeze 2026**, 43 acts: the bill included The Commodores and Morris Day & The Time — 1970s and ’80s R&B. JamBase lists the festival’s headliners as Dave Koz, **Marcus Anderson and Jeff Bradshaw**. Two of the three are not legacy-era artists.
- **Newport Beach 2026**: headlined by The Isley Brothers and Ledisi. Only one traditional smooth jazz legacy instrumentalist, Rick Braun, was top-billed. [That volume](#) already counted this from the other direction — twelve of thirteen headliners are R&B acts who first charted before smooth jazz existed, and the 2026 headliner first charted in 1959.

- **Capital Jazz 2025** ran Esperanza Spalding, Samara Joy and José James alongside the R&B legacy bill.

The policy defended in the room is not the policy on the poster. What replaced the smooth jazz legacy headliner was not a current artist — it was a different category of nostalgia.

Set that beside what this study counts elsewhere. Vincent Ingala holds **39 slots across eight event series** in the master file — sixth overall in [The Gatekeepers](#) table, fifteen years in — and is still billed as emerging, still in a support slot. [The Carousel](#) is the long form of that finding. There is no promotion available on this circuit. There is only rebooking.

THE LIMITS

What this page does not claim

The same discipline that governs the counting governs this page. Overreach here and everything above it goes too. Three things are **not** established and must not be asserted.

1. **That a festival can sell with no recognisable names at all.** Newport, Montreux and Love Supreme all sold out on blended bills that included legacy artists.
2. **That any particular new artist will draw a given number.** There is no per-artist draw data on this circuit for *anyone*, incumbent or newcomer. That absence is symmetrical, and it is the whole point of Claim 02.
3. **That legacy artists have no drawing power.** Desert Trip grossed roughly \$160m over two weekends in 2016 on Dylan, McCartney, the Stones, Young, Waters and The Who — the highest-grossing event of its kind. It was never repeated; the promoter called it “a special moment in time.”

What the page does establish is narrower and harder to move: the 80% claim has no source and no mechanism; the only research that has regressed star lineup against festival success found it non-significant; roughly a third of attendees are lineup-motivated; festivals sell out before naming anyone and cancel with the biggest names available; the one festival that ran the experiment published a profit; the incumbent roster’s median age is 66.5; and the posters already contradict the policy.

METHOD

How this page differs from the volumes

The festival volumes count lineups. This page checks claims, so its method is stated separately rather than borrowed. A claim is recorded here only where it is one this circuit demonstrably makes to artists and agents. Each is then set against a primary source — the study itself, a peer-reviewed paper, a Form 990, a state enforcement filing, an on-the-record trade interview, or the festival’s own published bill.

Where a supporting figure could not be traced to a primary source it was cut, not softened. That is why Claim 01 is an absence rather than a rebuttal: the search returned nothing, and nothing is the finding.

Two figures carry their caveats in the body rather than in a footnote, because they are the two a hostile reader goes after first: the Leenders result is a single study at $n = 47$, and the Krueger finding is about the *timing* of the superstar return, not its existence. Both are stated at their real strength and no higher.

One acknowledged weakness: the 2026 bills cited in Claim 08 come from published festival listings, not from [all-appearances.csv](#). They are the only figures on this page not reproducible from the study’s own files.

Academic sources retrieved August 2026. NEA figures from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 1982–2022. Financial figures from IRS Form 990 filings and the Maryland Office of the Attorney General. Festival outcomes from Pollstar, Variety, Billboard, the BBC and the Association of Independent Festivals. Ages computed from published birth years at August 2026.

SOURCES

Everything on this page, traceable

Bowen & Daniels (2005), “Does the Music Matter?”, *Event Management* 9(3):155–164 — [IngentaConnect](#) · [Live Music Exchange](#)

Leenders, van Telgen, Gemser & van der Wurff (2005), *Int. Journal on Media Management* 7(3–4):148–157 — [Taylor & Francis](#)

Connolly & Krueger (2006), “Rockonomics”, *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture* — [full text](#)

NEA Research Report #53, Stern, *Age and Arts Participation* (2011) — [arts.gov](#)

NEA, *Arts Participation Patterns in 2022* — [arts.gov](#)

NEA, *A Decade of Arts Engagement* — [arts.gov](#)

McBride interview, *DownBeat*, 20 August 2024 — [downbeat.com](#)

Berks Arts Council Form 990 — [ProPublica](#) · closure: [WDIY](#) · new management: [BCTV](#) · Fillmore 2025 — [Fillmore Jazz Festival](#)

Capital Jazz enforcement — [Maryland OAG](#)

Newport Folk 2026 on-sale — [Newport Buzz](#) · Glastonbury — [BBC](#) · [Access All Areas](#) · Bonnaroo 1-day tickets — [Front Gate](#)

Lollapalooza 2004 — [Variety](#) · Woodstock 50 — [Variety](#) · [Rolling Stone](#) · Splendour 2024 — [ABC](#) · Blue Ridge Rock 2023 — [WSLS](#) · [Metal Injection](#)

Cancellation counts — [Pollstar](#) · [AIF](#) · market analysis — [Pollstar, March 2025](#)

Seabreeze pricing and bill — [seabreezejazzfestival.com](#) · [JamBase](#) · Coachella ticketing — [Coachella FAQ](#)

We Out Here — [Electric Mode](#) · [Yahoo UK](#) · Glasper residency — [Live for Live Music](#)

THE ARGUMENT

In one paragraph

The rest of this study shows that the experiment is never run. This page shows that the reasons given for not running it do not survive contact with the record. The revenue figure has no source. The ticketing product cannot produce the attribution the figure claims. The research that has tested lineup star power against festival success found it non-significant. Festivals sell out before naming anyone and collapse with the biggest names alive. The one major jazz festival that deliberately raised its current-artist share posted its first profit and its first advance sellout since 1969. And the roster the whole argument protects has a median age of 66.5.

The claim was never a finding. It was a habit, and somebody gave it a number.

READ NEXT

This page checks what gets said. The volumes count what gets booked — and the counting is what the claims have to survive.

THE SUMMARY

Ten Facts

Ten checkable numbers. Send this one first.

READ →

THE NETWORK

The Gatekeepers

Four desks, and the people who sell and buy at the same time.

READ →

THREE CAREERS

The Carousel

Ingala, Lington and Koz — the ceiling and the way out.

READ →

Festival Stats and Studies · Common Myths · Compiled August 2026. Method: a claim is recorded only where this circuit demonstrably makes it, and checked against a primary source. Figures that could not be traced to one were cut rather than softened. Companion volumes: [The Gatekeepers](#), [Bosco's Berks Jazz Fest](#), [Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival](#), [San Diego Smooth Jazz Festival](#), [Newport Beach Jazz Festival](#), [Yosemite Jazz Train](#), [Daytona Jazz Weekend](#), [Catalina Island JazzTrax](#), [Gulf Coast Summer Fest](#), [Jazz at the Oxford](#), [BMG Concerts](#), [The Carousel](#). The data · Ten Facts.