

FESTIVAL STATS AND STUDIES · SAN DIEGO EDITION · AUGUST 2026

Eight editions of the *San Diego Smooth Jazz Festival*, and one man who has never missed a single one.

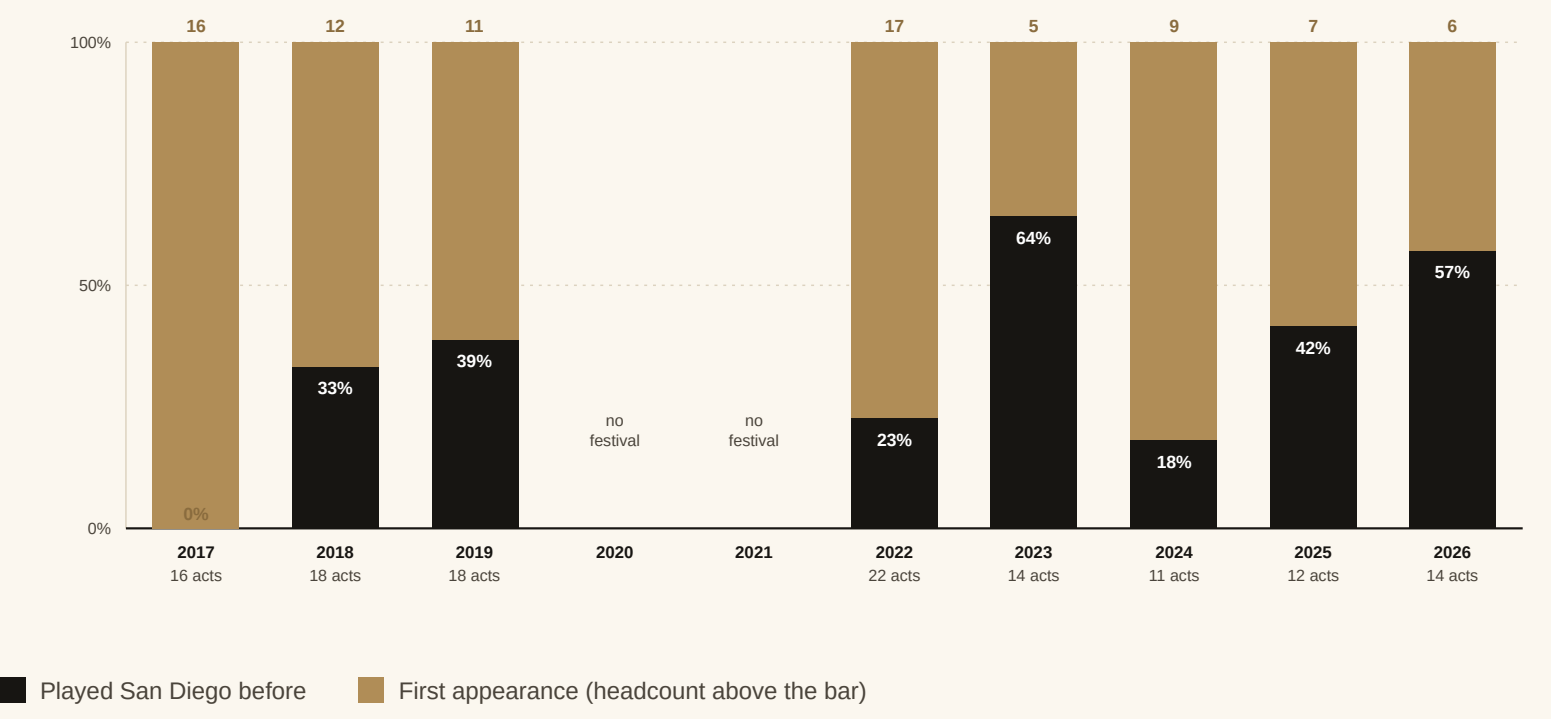
Every edition from the first annual in 2017 through the eighth in 2026. One hundred and twenty-five artist-slots, eighty-three distinct artists, one promoter. In 2026, 57.1% of the bill had played the festival before.

8 / 8 editions featuring Eric Darius, who is also the festival's host	57.1% of the 2026 bill had already played this eight-year-old festival
51% of everyone San Diego has ever booked has also played Newport Beach	1 promoter books this festival and the Long Beach Jazz Festival

EXHIBIT A

The rotation rate, eight editions

Each bar is one festival. The dark portion is artists who had already played San Diego. The brass sliver is everyone appearing for the first time, with the headcount above it. The first bar is 100% brass because the festival did not exist before it. Eight years later the dark portion is the majority.



Eight editions, 125 artist-slots, 83 distinct artists — 1.51 bookings per artist. Excluding the inaugural year, 38.5% of every slot went to a returning artist. No festival was held in 2020 or 2021. The 2022 spike in newcomers is a venue change, not a change of heart: the event moved to the Rady Shell and expanded to twenty-two slots, most of them side-stage.

EXHIBIT B

The host is also the act

Eric Darius has played all eight editions of the San Diego Smooth Jazz Festival. He has also been its host every year since 2018, according to promoter copy; his own site confirms the role for the seventh edition (2025). Brian Culbertson hosted the first edition, per promoter copy, and has played three editions in total.

The 100% appearance rate coincides with the host role.

For scale: across the ten largest smooth jazz events in the United States, no artist has ever posted a 100% rate at any of them except Brian Simpson and the house band at Rehoboth — both of whom also hold standing roles there (musical director and house band).

EXHIBIT C

Who actually plays San Diego

Share of the eight editions. Nine artists have played three or more times in a festival that has only existed for eight. Ten artists account for 29.6% of every slot ever sold.

ARTIST	EDITIONS	RATE	NOTE
Eric Darius	8 / 8	100%	host since 2018 (promoter copy)
Boney James	5 / 8	62.5%	
Richard Elliot	4 / 8	50.0%	
Brian Culbertson	3 / 8	37.5%	hosted the first edition (promoter copy)
Peter White	3 / 8	37.5%	
Rick Braun	3 / 8	37.5%	
Norman Brown	3 / 8	37.5%	
Jonathan Butler	3 / 8	37.5%	
Brian Simpson	3 / 8	37.5%	
Keiko Matsui	2 / 8	25.0%	
Michael Franks	2 / 8	25.0%	
Jeff Lorber	2 / 8	25.0%	both times as Jazz Funk Soul
Everette Harp	2 / 8	25.0%	both times as Jazz Funk Soul
Paul Jackson Jr	2 / 8	25.0%	both times as Jazz Funk Soul

Jeff Lorber, Everette Harp and Paul Jackson Jr. have appeared twice each — both times as the same band, Jazz Funk Soul, playing the same configuration five years apart.

EXHIBIT D

Two festivals, one roster

Newport Beach is produced by Omega Events. San Diego is produced by Rainbow Promotions of Long Beach, which also produces the Long Beach Jazz Festival. Three separate events, two separate companies; Newport Beach and San Diego are about 90 road miles apart.

Forty-two artists play both Newport and San Diego — 51% of San Diego's entire all-time roster and 31% of Newport's.

No coordination between the promoters is alleged; both book from the same pool of touring artists.

THE 2026 SAN DIEGO BILL, BY HISTORY

Already played San Diego: Boney James (5th time) · Eric Darius (8th) · Brian Simpson (3rd) · Najee (3rd) · Jessy J (2nd) · Rebecca Jade (2nd) · Lin Rountree (2nd) · Pieces of a Dream (2nd)

New to San Diego: Bob James · Acoustic Alchemy · Kim Waters · Lalah Hathaway · Andrea Lisa · Oli Silk

Of those six “new” names, Bob James has been recording since 1963, Acoustic Alchemy formed in 1981, Kim Waters has released more than twenty albums since 1989, and Lalah Hathaway played Newport Beach in 2021. Two are genuinely unfamiliar to this circuit.

METHOD

Where the numbers come from

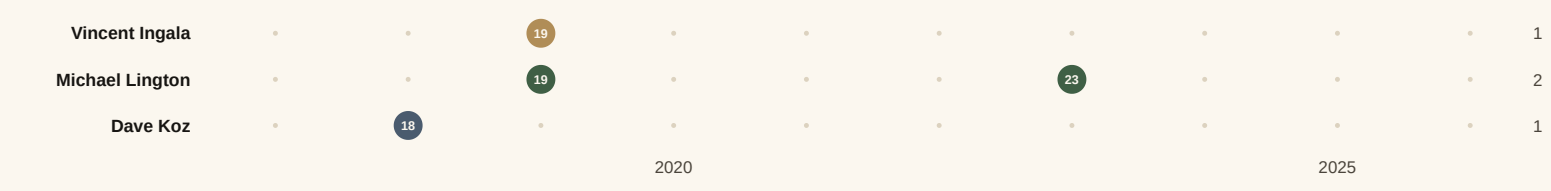
Lineups were assembled from the promoter's own release copy as reproduced by KPBS, The Urban Music Scene and Do San Diego, from the San Diego Reader's dated event listings, from JamBase, and — for 2026 — from the venue's own page at theshell.org. Every edition from the first through the eighth is accounted for.

Two names carry a single source: Jeanette Harris in 2025, and the possibility of one or two unannounced 2025 openers that Rainbow's copy flagged as "to be announced." Neither changes any figure by more than one point. Group billings are counted as their named members. There was no 2020 or 2021 festival.

EXHIBIT · THE CAROUSEL

Ingala, Lington and Koz here

Three careers tracked across every festival in this study. A filled dot is an appearance; the number at the right is the total at this festival. 8 editions, 2017–2026. Vincent Ingala is the genre's permanent newcomer, Michael Lington its most evenly distributed working artist, and Dave Koz the one who stopped waiting for the phone and built an event of his own.



Neither Ingala nor Koz has ever been booked into San Diego under his own name. Ingala came in 2019 as one third of “Sax to the Max”; Koz came in 2018 inside Summer Horns. Lington is the only one of the three the festival has billed on his own, twice. Full cross-festival treatment in Festival Stats and Studies · Volume V — The Carousel.

READ NEXT

Forty-two artists play both San Diego and Newport Beach. The overlap is the point.

ORANGE COUNTY

Newport Beach Jazz Festival

One artist billed under five different band names.

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Festival Stats and Studies · San Diego Edition · Compiled August 2026. Companion volumes: The Gatekeepers, What they tell you, Boscov’s Berks Jazz Fest, Rehoboth Beach 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.

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