



BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC

SYSTEMIC RACIAL BIAS IN LONDON MUSIC LICENSING EXPOSED BY LANDMARK TWO-YEAR REPORT

REMEL (Race Equality in Music Event Licensing) investigation finds Black music events cancelled, restricted or blocked at far higher rates than white-led events

The bias is estimated to cost London's Black and South Asian live music scene up to £141m a year, with more than £650m at risk over five years

"The REMEL report is calling for a fair, transparent, evidence-based and culturally competent licensing system. A system that protects people without profiling them. A system that assesses risk through facts, not assumptions. A system that recognises the value of Black and South Asian music, audiences, promoters and venues as an integral part of London's cultural and economic life. Culture is not a risk. Culture is an economic asset."

- Charisse Beaumont, Black Lives in Music

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[14th October 2026]: The REMEL Report (Race Equality in Music Event Licensing) - the most comprehensive investigation to date into how licensing and policing shape the fortunes of Black and South Asian artists, promoters and venues in London has been published today.

Drawing on surveys, interviews, focus groups, industry workshops, Freedom of Information requests and analysis of licensing data, the report finds that Black events face disproportionate cancellations, restrictions or shutdowns compared with white-led events of a similar size - often with little explanation given and no clear route to appeal.

The report calls on the government to help unlock the huge potential of Black and South Asian music industry.

Black and South Asian music and entertainment scene in the UK is a powerful and transformative force, deeply embedded in the nation's cultural life. From underground clubs that support new talent to major arenas that showcase global stars, this vibrant community has played a key role in shaping British identity, creativity, and social connection.

The two-year study was led by the REMEL steering group comprising **Greater London Authority** (GLA), the **Metropolitan Police Service** (MPS), **UK Music**, **LIVE**, the **Musicians' Union** and a wide network of promoters, artists, venue operators and community representatives. It follows a joint letter from the Musicians' Union and BLiM to **London Mayor Sadiq Khan** calling for action on racial bias in event licensing.

*"Licensing doesn't just affect a few artists or a handful of events. It touches every part of the music ecosystem, from the young artist trying to get their first gig, to the promoter building a platform for emerging talent, to the local venue that brings life to a community," says **Charisse Beaumont, Chief Executive, Black Lives in Music**, "Across the research, people called for a licensing system built on transparency, dialogue, cultural understanding, clear definitions of risk and a shared commitment to safety."*

"The good news is that everyone involved in this report, from music industry bodies, to the Mayor of London and Metropolitan Police have all welcomed its findings and want to help reform the system, for everyone's benefit."

"We would like Prime Minister Andy Burnham to build on his undoubted enthusiasm for the music industry and night time economy by working with the forthcoming independent London Nightlife Taskforce to enforce the REMEL recommendations and ignite London nightlife."

One of the first announcements of Andy Burnham's government was a business rates cut, a lifeline for pubs, clubs and live music venues. But as REMEL shows, for many Black and South Asian-led venues and promoters, the barrier is obtaining a licence in the first place. Events in London's most ethnically diverse boroughs are blocked or hit with police objections at far higher rates than others.

*"A rates cut does nothing for the promoter who, as REMEL documents, was charged £10,000 for police attendance at a show with no history of trouble," explains Charisse Beaumont, "or a venue like the **Colour Factory**, which lost £55,000 after a tragic incident occurred outside the venue after operating hours. Police suspended its licence and posted warning signs at the entrance, causing financial losses and staff redundancies for an independent venue that had done nothing wrong."*

The UK Music 'Black Music Means Business' Report (2026), found the estimated **£24.5 billion** of the UK's £30 billion recorded music market over the past 30 years has come from Black music genres, representing over **80% of the total market**, with British artists contributing approximately £11.94 billion of this figure. Alongside this, the UK's live music sector is itself a highly lucrative space, **generating £6.1 billion** according to the *LIVE Music Report (2024)*. This figure could be even higher with the right reform.

Yet the **REMEL** report finds that despite all this, the sector still faces deep systemic and institutional barriers that limit even more success.

Some respondents told of informal pressure from the police, with off the record briefings suggesting future licence reviews and other measures to stop Black led events from happening. They told how certain music genres are assumed to be a risk despite evidence to the contrary, or how single or isolated incidents at one event can create long term reputational consequences for a genre.

Licensing authorities were felt to often misuse area-wide crime statistics to justify closing venues or denying licences, even when a specific venue has a clean safety record. High local crime rates across an entire neighbourhood are wrongly blamed on individual music venues.

It also shows how promoters and venue owners face unreasonable barriers for their nascent businesses, with licensing authorities insisting on more security or medical staff at their events, increasing costs to unsustainable levels, compared with events elsewhere.

Key findings

- **Black events are disproportionately cancelled**, restricted, or blocked compared to white-led events. 46%: Share of police-affected cases in which the venue reportedly closed entirely
- The **economic impact** of excluding Black and South Asian events is significant. There was a £1.1bn estimated spend on Black and South Asian live music in London in 2024, with an estimated £127-£141million lost annually in live music spend and a projected loss of more than £650m in total spend over five years, due to licensing bias.
- **Black promoters frequently have events shut down** with little or no explanation, leaving no path for accountability or appeal.
- **The legacy of Form 696 persists**, with current risk assessments systematically singling out Black and South Asian live music events and imposing punitive surveillance and heavy conditions without credible evidence of increased safety risk.
- **Afrobeats, Hip Hop, R&B and Dancehall** are flagged as “high risk,” while Indie, Pop, and Rock genres face little scrutiny.
- **Media fuels criminalisation** with Black events framed as “mobs” or “chaos,” shifting blame from institutions onto communities.
- **Temporary Event Notices (TENs) are more likely to be refused in London’s most diverse boroughs**, restricting opportunities for Black events.
- **Unverified intelligence**, including superficial online searches, is routinely used to justify heightened scrutiny of Black and South Asian events, reinforcing racialised assumptions of risk.
- **Many white-owned venues are supported back into business after incidents**, while Black venues are forced to close.
- **Black and South Asian events are being pushed out of central London** by restrictive licensing, gentrification, and planning policy.
- **Inflated security, insurance and compliance demands** fall hardest on Black and South Asian events.

- **Mental health impact is relentless** as cancellations, surveillance, and financial strain are driving burnout among Black and South Asian entrepreneurs.
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Case Study: The Colour Factory

Despite having strong safety measures in place, including ID scanners, a dedicated welfare team, and the presence of a medic at all late night events, **The Colour Factory** the venue faced aggressive enforcement after a tragic incident occurred outside the venue after operating hours. Despite full venue cooperation and confirmation that no weapon was ever inside, police suspended its licence and posted warning signs at the entrance, causing over £55,000 in financial losses and staff redundancies for an independent venue that had done nothing wrong. The venue appealed the licensing decision and won the case, but never recovered the costs.

Case Study: Blue Note

When the New York jazz institution Blue Note applied to open its first UK venue in Soho, the Metropolitan Police formally objected, citing "crime and disorder" risk and warning that patrons dispersing late at night could be exposed to existing gang activity in the area, the same generic, area-wide risk language REMEL finds routinely applied to Black and South Asian-led events. Westminster City Council initially granted a licence with sharply reduced hours (as early as 10.30pm on Sundays, against the 1am close requested), prompting a 3,000-signature public petition and open frustration from the jazz community at what musicians called an outdated "den of debauchery" stereotype. Unlike the promoters and venues REMEL documents, Blue Note could draw on the resources of an internationally established brand, a hotel-group backer and dedicated legal representation; within three months the licence was close to its original request, and the venue opened in September 2026 with a season including Robert Glasper and Erykah Badu. The case illustrates what REMEL terms "financial racism": the same crime-based objections used against Black and South Asian-led events, overturned in months by a brand with the capital and profile to fight back, a route rarely open to the independent promoters.

Charisse Beaumont, Chief Executive of Black Lives in Music, said:

"We are grateful for the collaboration of the Metropolitan Police, local authorities, music industry bodies and the GLA on project REMEL. This was a collective effort with the goal to provide evidence and solutions for change in the licensing process. It's now time to move from recommendation to action. We need the REMEL recommendations and principles embedded into the very fabric of the licensing system to create a truly thriving nightlife. When licensing decisions are shaped by racial bias and overpolicing in music events, it suffocates creativity, stifles entrepreneurship and blocks economic opportunity."

Naomi Pohl, General Secretary, Musicians Union, said:

"The Musicians' Union is proud to stand behind the REMEL Report's findings. As a core project partner, we committed to addressing racial inequalities in live music licensing, and holding those

with the power to make positive change to account. Music made by and for communities from the Global Majority hold huge cultural value in the UK, and it is vital that all relevant parties work to ensure these communities are treated fairly within licensing processes. The cancellation of live music events due to racial inequalities means the loss of work opportunities for underrepresented musicians, the loss of platforms for cultural expression and the loss of access to different musical styles and genres for audiences.”

Jon Collins, CEO, LIVE, said:

“This report sets out all too clearly the long-term barriers and challenges faced by Black and South Asian people in London’s live music industry. It highlights how a skewed perception of risk leads to over policing and inconsistent and disproportionate licensing decisions and evidences the personal and economic cost that follows. As LIVE we were honoured to offer our support throughout the REMEL process. And as LIVE Trust, we are supporting positive action to tackle the challenges identified via Black Lives in Music’s LIVE Pathways, a 12-month pilot that addresses inequality of opportunity for people coming through the live music pipeline. That commitment to positive action needs to be adopted by all partners in this project and every organisation and institution that can have an impact.”

UK Music, Chief Executive, Tom Kiehl said:

“REMEL’s findings that Black and South Asian-led events are being cancelled, restricted and shut down at significantly higher rates than white-led events is highly alarming and poses a direct threat to the future prosperity of our world-leading sector. No individual, community or venue should ever be racially profiled, which is why we join REMEL’s call for a licensing system that is based on fairness and facts, not prejudice.

“The UK music industry contributes an incredible £8 billion to the economy and supports 220,000 jobs, but without a transparent, evidence-based licensing model that works for everyone we risk causing untold damage to vital musical hubs across the country and undermining their cultural and economic power.”

Mark Davyd, CEO, Music Venue Trust, said:

“This is the most important piece of research on barriers to culture that the live music sector has been handed in years, and everybody working in it should read the whole thing rather than the summary. The evidence is careful, it is substantial, and it asks all of us who make decisions about licensing, programming and funding to look honestly at our own part in it. Music Venue Trust will be responding to it in full, and we would encourage every venue, promoter, local authority and police force to do the same.”

Michael Kill CEO NTIA / Chair IPSA, said:

“The REMEL report confronts an uncomfortable reality our industry has faced for too long. An exclusionary culture remains within parts of licensing, policing and local authority decision making, disproportionately impacting music cultures supported by Black and South Asian communities.

We cannot accept a system where genres, promoters, venues or audiences are viewed differently because of the music or communities they represent. When perceptions of risk replace evidence, we do more than restrict events. We restrict opportunity, suppress talent and undermine the cultural and economic potential of our cities.

We must educate where understanding is lacking, challenge institutional behaviours and root out prejudice and discrimination wherever they influence decision making. Diversity cannot be celebrated publicly while systems behind closed doors disadvantage cultures that make our night time economy so powerful.

These music cultures are fundamental to our industry’s future. They develop artists, entrepreneurs, promoters and venues, build audiences and contribute to the cultural tapestry that will define the United Kingdom for generations.

For London to remain a global destination for music, culture and nightlife, we cannot exclude talent or suppress cultural expression through outdated attitudes and disproportionate licensing and enforcement.

REMEL gives us evidence, recommendations and a platform for change. The industry must now work alongside authorities, communities and policymakers to create a system that protects public safety without prejudice, enables responsible businesses to thrive and gives every culture the same opportunity to succeed.

The measure of this report will be whether, in the years ahead, we can point to real change and confidently say that talent, creativity and opportunity are no longer determined by your colour, background, community or the music you champion.”

James Joseph, Chair, Black Lives in Music & Trustee of World Heart Beat London, said:

“Fair licensing should protect venues and the public; it should never become a barrier to culture, creativity or equality. As both Chair of Black Lives in Music and a Trustee to a Live Music Venue and Studio, I understand the responsibility venues carry around safety, licensing, compliance and commercial risk. But those responsibilities must be applied fairly, transparently and proportionately.

No venue owner should feel that programming Black or South Asian artists, promoters or audiences brings an additional regulatory risk to their licence or their business. When that perception exists, whether through inconsistent practice, disproportionate scrutiny or fear of enforcement, the consequence is not only discriminatory — it changes who gets booked, who gets invested in and ultimately whose music gets heard.

There is also a compelling economic argument for change. Fair and proportionate licensing gives venues the confidence to programme more broadly, invest in new artists and audiences,

and build sustainable businesses. Diverse programming is not a risk to the live music economy; it is one of its greatest strengths. A fairer licensing system will create stronger venues, greater cultural participation and a healthier, more ambitious live music industry for everyone.”

Justine Simons OBE, Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries, said:

“London’s music scene is one of our greatest strengths, but this report shines a spotlight on the deeply concerning challenges facing Black and South Asian-led music events. We must all work together to tackle the unacceptable inequalities uncovered by this report and ensure all music businesses can thrive on a fair and equal footing. The Mayor is committed to doing all he can to help, and his new licensing powers from Government will give us a say in local policies and support our capital’s nightlife, as we continue to build a better London for everyone.”

Philip Kolvin KC, Leading Licensing Barrister, Visiting Professor Westminster University School of Law, Society and Popular Culture and Patron of Institute of Licensing, Said:

“The central lesson from this meticulously researched and presented report, that black and South Asian-led events are disproportionately cancelled, restricted, or blocked compared to white-led events, is one that must galvanise policy and decision makers to change. In the light of this report, all police and licensing authorities should review their practices and assumptions, to ensure parity of treatment and to release the full potential of this important creative sector.”

Cameron Leslie, Chair on behalf of the London Nightlife Taskforce, said:

"The REMEL report is an important and timely contribution to the future of London's night-time economy. London's global reputation as a vibrant, creative city has been built on the extraordinary diversity of its people and communities, and Black and South Asian artists, promoters, venues and audiences have played a fundamental role in shaping the culture and identity of our city after dark.

We must ensure that the systems supporting our night-time economy work fairly for everyone. Licensing, policing and risk assessment should be transparent, proportionate and grounded in evidence, and we must continue to challenge outdated perceptions and practices that can create unnecessary barriers for particular communities or genres of music. Public safety, cultural vibrancy and economic opportunity are not competing ambitions. London must deliver all three.

The independent London Nightlife Taskforce welcomes REMEL's focus not only on identifying the challenges, but also on providing practical solutions. The real value of this work will be in what happens next, turning its recommendations into meaningful action, building greater trust between communities, venues, licensing authorities and the police, and ensuring that London remains a place where creativity and enterprise can thrive.

Importantly, this report also provides a foundation from which the London Nightlife Commission can benchmark progress and focus on the key actions needed across the capital. It gives us an opportunity to ensure that cultural, social and economic value are given equal consideration, regardless of colour, gender or background.

Protecting the diversity of our night-time economy is not simply about preserving what makes London special today. It is about creating a fairer environment and the right conditions for the next generation of artists, entrepreneurs, venues and communities to shape what London becomes tomorrow."

Paul Adams, CEO, Institute of Licensing, said:

"The findings of the REMEL report present an opportunity for all those involved in licensing to reflect on how we can continue to build public confidence in licensing decision-making. Effective licensing depends on balancing public safety with the social, cultural and economic benefits that events bring to our communities.

Across the licensing profession there is a shared commitment to fairness, evidence-based decision making and continual improvement. By encouraging open discussion and greater understanding, this report can help inform positive progress and support a licensing system that is transparent, proportionate and accessible to all.

The Institute of Licensing looks forward to working with partners across the sector to help promote good practice, strengthen trust and ensure that licensing continues to support safe, vibrant and inclusive communities."

Headline recommendations

(The full report sets out 19 recommendations across five areas: national law and policy, evidence and procedural fairness, ending exclusionary practice, accountability and affordability and workforce capacity.)

- **Full and Independent Review of the Licensing System** - The Home Office and the GLA should hire an independent panel of experts to review the venue and event licensing system. Focus on Racial fairness, Police influence and consistency in applying rules
- **Embed Equality and Human Rights in Licensing Law** - ensuring mandatory fairness, ban discrimination and ensure transparent reasoning
- **Establish Transparent Evidence Standards** - Fact-based risk, Clear evidence, Early dialogue
- **Publish Licensing Data and Monitoring Disparities** - Local authorities should publish annual, detailed data on licensing decisions, monitored by an independent panel to ensure full transparency.
- **Integrating Cultural Justice into National Licensing Guidance** - Frame events and venues as public assets that deliver social and economic value, rather than treating them as automatic risks. Ensure decision makers weigh community benefits, employment and talent development. Prevent unfamiliarity with specific music genres, audiences or cultures from being used as evidence of risk.
- **Expand Access to Capital and Relief Funding** - The GLA, DCMS, British Business Bank and local enterprise partnerships should establish targeted loan schemes, micro-grants and a dedicated Cultural Events Relief Fund to support cultural and nightlife operators

For more information about BLiM see: <http://www.blim.org.uk>

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Notes to Editors:

About REMEL

REMEL stands for Race Equality in Music Event Licensing. REMEL brought together a broad range of stakeholders including - Black Lives in Music, the Musicians' Union, LIVE (the sector body for the live music industry), UK Music, the GLA, the London Licensing Managers Forum, plus artists, promoters and a representative of the security industry. The project was launched in July 2023 following a joint letter from the Musicians' Union and BLiM to Mayor Sadiq Khan, and the report published today is the result of a two-year investigation into racial bias in the licensing and policing of London's live music events.

About Black Lives in Music:

Black Lives in Music (BLiM) was founded as a direct response to the lived experience of founder Charisse Beaumont. As a Black woman working in the British music industry, she has experienced and understands the difficulties of racial inequality in this professional area. BLiM addresses the current inequality of opportunity for Black people aspiring to progress within the music industry.

BLiM's advocacy is underpinned by its own research and government engagement. Being Black in the UK Music Industry Pt. 1 (2021), produced with Opinium Research, remains the largest survey of Black musicians and music industry professionals conducted in the UK to date; its findings led Charisse Beaumont to give evidence to Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee for its Misogyny in Music inquiry, the first inquiry of its kind. BLiM has since published Your Safety Your Say (2024), its survey on bullying and harassment in the industry, and REMEL (Race Equality in Music Event Licensing), a two-year study commissioned by the Greater London Authority and the Mayor of London's office into racial bias in event licensing. BLiM has also launched an industry-wide Anti-Racism Code of Conduct, endorsed by the Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (CIISA).

Since its inception, BLiM has provided safe space sessions for Black students in music conservatoires, begun discussions with conservatoires on the decolonisation process, and supported Black students and staff who have suffered discrimination. In such a short time the organisation has made massive strides and continues to thrive, achieving greater goals and championing change.