SUPERSTARS AND RISING STARS BAND TOGETHER TO ASK CONGRESS TO SUPPORT U.S. INDEPENDENT MUSIC VENUES IN THE QUEST to #SaveOurStages

FROM ALICE COOPER TO ZZ TOP
FROM BILLIE EILISH TO BILLY JOEL TO BILLY PORTER
FROM MIRANDA LAMBERT TO MAVIS STAPLES
FROM DAVE GROHL TO PAT BOONE
FROM TIFFANY HADDISH TO CAROL BURNETT

June 18, 2020—Stating that “the collapse of this crucial element in the music industry’s ecosystem would be devastating,” more than 600 of nation’s most cherished musical artists, including Dave Grohl of Foo Fighters, Mavis Staples, Lady Gaga, André 3000, Coldplay, Willie Nelson, Billie Ellish, Gary Clark Jr, Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin, Miranda Lambert, Billy Joel, Earth Wind & Fire, Kacey Musgraves, Leon Bridges, Wyclef Jean, and Bon Iver, along with beloved comedians such as Jay Leno, Tiffany Haddish, Jeff Foxworthy, Jerry Seinfeld, and Tig Notaro, issued a letter to Congress asking legislators to provide urgent financial support for independent venues and promoters in the U.S., which are in grave peril due to the pandemic.

Formed at the onset of the Covid-19 shutdown, the National Independent Venue Association (NIVA), now has nearly 2,000 members in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. These independent venues and promoters were the first to close and will be the last to fully reopen. They are at real risk of closing permanently if Congress does not take quick and specific action to address the unique circumstances of this still-shuttered component of the small business sector, which normally fuels substantial economic growth for the communities they serve.

The 600 artists sending the letter to Congress are joining more than 500 other touring artists and comedians with a combined social media presence exceeding 900,000,000 who have urged their fans to have their voices heard at SaveOurStages.com. So far people across America have written more than 500,000 emails asking Congress to #SaveOurStages.

Today’s artists’ letter to Congress says, in part:

“We will know America is “back” when our music venues are filled with fans safely enjoying concerts with abandon. The live music experience is inextricably tied to our nation’s cultural and economic fabric. In fact, 53% of Americans – that’s 172 million of us – attended a concert last year.
“Independent venues give artists their start, often as the first stage most of us have played on. These venues were the first to close and will be the last to reopen. With zero revenue and the overwhelming overhead of rent, mortgage, utilities, taxes and insurance, 90% of independent venues report that if the shutdown lasts six months and there’s no federal assistance, they will never reopen again.

“We are asking you to support NIVA’s request for assistance so these beloved venues can reopen when it’s safe and welcome us and our fans back in. The collapse of this crucial element in the music industry’s ecosystem would be devastating.”

Harvey Mason Jr., president, The Recording Academy, Daman Whiteside CEO of Academy of Country Music, and Greg Harris, president of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum also signed the letter.

The shutdown is indefinite and likely to extend into 2021, as these venues which host live music and comedy are in the final stage of nearly every jurisdictions’ reopening plans; many are not permitted to open until there’s a vaccine or cure. The ability to open at partial capacity is not economically feasible. Rents, utilities, payroll, taxes, insurance, and artist pay are fixed costs – they are not on a sliding scale that matches the capacity venues are permitted to host. Due to the national routing of most tours, this industry will not recover until the entire country is open at 100% capacity. NIVA members need assistance in order to survive until that day. And their absence will be sorely felt - for every $1 spent on a ticket at small venues, a total of $12 in economic activity is generated within communities on restaurants, hotels, taxis, and retail establishments. Keeping independent venues alive is a benefit not just for fans, employees and artists; it’s an investment in communities across America.

Said NIVA President Dayna Frank, who is also the president of First Avenue Productions in Minneapolis, “The potential collapse of the independent arm of our industry cannot be exaggerated. Indie venues are the safe places that allow artists to grow, explore, and intertwine the musical culture of their city and their artistic community with their own inner voice. We are steadfast launching pads, sounding boards, and cheerleaders for the greatest talent in the world...before the world has ever heard of them. We’re incredibly grateful for these emerging artists and legends who are putting a spotlight on the need to #SaveOurStages. We want nothing more to welcome them and their fans back when it’s safe to do so, which is why we’re working so hard to secure our survival.”

You can learn more about the plight of independent venues and policy asks here: NIVA Fact Sheet. Click here for an alphabetical list of 1,100 artists who support NIVA.

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