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GIGWISE'S 22 BEST LIVE ACTS OF 2022

THIS WAS A TOUGH ONE...



GIGWISE

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The trick is in the name... we go to a lot of gigs. Spread up and down the country, and having a presence at near enough every festival in the UK and beyond, reviewing and photographing the best live acts around is what we do best.

Having seen some of the finest acts around from their infancy to now, as well as keeping up with the legends, trying to pick the best performer each year is a tricky one with a lot of in-fighting at Gigwise HQ. But, we think we've managed it...

Let's dive into our list of the 22 best live acts of 2022!

EDITOR'S PICKS

GIGWISE'S 22 BEST TRACKS OF 2022

EVERY THE 1975 SO RANKED FROM WOR: TO BEST

ALBUM REVIEW: TAYLOR SWIFT - MIDNIGHTS

LOVING THE UNCHANGEABLE: MADISON BEER IN

DANCE YOURSELF CLEAN: TOVE LO IN CONVERSATION

LET'S EAT GRANDMA! KOKO, LONDON, 19/10/22

SLAM DUNK 2022 REVIEWED

EVERY MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE SONG RANKED FROM WOR:

LATEST

THE FIRST ACTS FOR CLOSEUP FESTIVAL HAVE JUST BEEN

SIOUXSIE RETURNS AFTER 10-YEAR HIA TO HEADLINE THE BI

NXWORRIES ARE BRINGING THE PARTY TO BROCKWELL PARK AT

THE FIRST ACTS FOR HELSINKI'S FLOW FESTIVAL ARE

GIGWISE'S 22 BEST LIVE ACTS OF 2022

ALBUM REVIEW: LIT SIMZ - NO THANK YC



22. Bon Iver

Over a decade on from their very first tour, Bon Iver continue to captivate wherever they go. With a setlist spanning their entire four-album discography, as well as songs from their numerous EP and soundtrack work, they continue to amaze with their depth of sound and their state of the art, immersive sound design. At times, it feels as though you've found your way into the material, surrounded by the thunderous drum and soothing sax lines that make up the best of all Bon Iver has come to mean. With a brand new stage designing, pinging lights to each and every corner of every room; a Bon Iver show must be seen to be believed, in all the very best of ways. - Caillean Coffey



21. Baby Queen

A festival staple that seemed to grace every stage imaginable this year, Baby Queen is the sort of artist you stumble upon and stick around for. And its totally clear why; with a discography housing some of the catchiest songs of recent years, tracks like 'Want Me', 'Dover Beach' and 'Raw Thoughts' would have even the most reluctant crowd moving. Commanding her crowd with the skill of a far more established artist, it's quite baffling how Bella manages to keep her vocals that crisp and good when running round the stage, jumping up and down and laughing almost the whole time. A feel-good watch through and through, it's no wonder she's been snapped up to support the likes of Olivia Rodrigo and Conan Gray as an artist deserving of bigger stages and busier crowds. - Lucy Harbron



20. Spector

Spector's 10-year anniversary gig for their debut album *Enjoy It While It Lasts* was a night that almost everyone in the crowd seemed to happily and solemnly connect over. As we all heard favourite songs from teenage years get played at Scala, there was happiness in their existence but a strange sadness at the time that had passed since their release. With so much emotion in one room at one time and with Spector playing on absolute top form, it's hard not to recognise the beauty and impact that this gig had.

- Dale Maplethorpe



19. Lorde

Bringing her solar power tour to the UK at the perfect time, just as the slightest bit of heat broke through - i don't remember a time an artist has seemed so genuinely joyful about being back on stage. Beaming throughout, the happiness was infectious as the tour was a cross-era mindmap of the themes, stories and ages that Lorde has documented since her first record. Playing some of those earlier tracks for the first time ever, the way the crowd reacted during songs like 'Ribs' had half the audience sobbing remembering their teen years and the younger fans making core memories for their own. Pausing on the stage at Roundhouse to eat a banana and sit for a second to settle some dizziness, her candid chat and natural stage presence had the vibe of a night out with a lifelong friend. And as she talked about how some fans have been with her now for 15 years, she truly feels like a forever bestie. - Lucy Harbron



18. The Rolling Stones

Seeing The Rolling Stones live is real bucket list stuff that I think a lot of younger fans doubted would ever happen. So not only getting to see them, but seeing them continue their Hyde Park legacy with a two-show takeover at BST was incredibly special. And sure, we might be saying that even if they were shit as it's a true legacy act - but Mick, Keith, Ronnie and co still definitely have it. Running around the stage like he was closer to his 30s than his 80, Mick Jagger remains the epitome of a showman as the OAPs managed an energy level that far younger bands would struggle to hit. Playing a two hour set of all the hits, no one went home disappointed. - Lucy Harbron



17. Fred Again...

From the outside it looks simple; Fred Gibson takes to the stage, laptop ready and waiting to take a captive audience on a journey through the highs and lows of dance. What you get, however, is something far more special. A show that has you both parts dancing and crying; arms in the air acting as conveyors of light and emotion; with never a moment's rest. Whether you've managed to find your way to the dancefloor or are stood in front of an unwanted seat, the energy is the same, unparalleled in its sense of joy and heartfelt contemplation. We lost dancing, but this feels so much more than that.

- Cailean Coffey



16. Phoebe Bridgers

The ascent of Phoebe Bridgers has been astronomical. Something about her soothing tones and heart wrenching lyrics had us gripped whilst the world went through some extreme motions. This year she managed to get out on the road in support of her Grammy-nominated sophomore album, *Punisher*, and sell out four nights at London's Brixton Academy. Throw in a string of incredible festival performances, a surprise Glasto feature from Arlo Parks and you've got a pretty incredible summer. Now she's finishing the year with a two-night stint singing as Sally during *The Nightmare Before Christmas Live* and an unexpected collaboration with SZA as well as her annual Christmas cover. - David Roskin



15. IDLES

“Are you ready to colliiiiide? Are you ready to look after each other?” asks Joe Talbot at each gig to his bands adoring audience midway through opener ‘Colossus’ . Seconds later, the Bristol band explode into life, leaving a sea of bodies crashing into one another in front of them. It sets the tone for a frenetic two hour set with the socially conscious tunes from 2018’s Joy As An Act Of Resistance usually being the best received. As evidenced by their early year tour (where they played four nights at the Brixton Academy) and a memorable Glastonbury Other Stage performance, the end of each gig sees the crowd’s senses firmly tested, voices hoarse and bodies bruised and battered. They may be nearing their 40s, but IDLES still proved they were an elite tier live act in 2022. - Matthew McLister



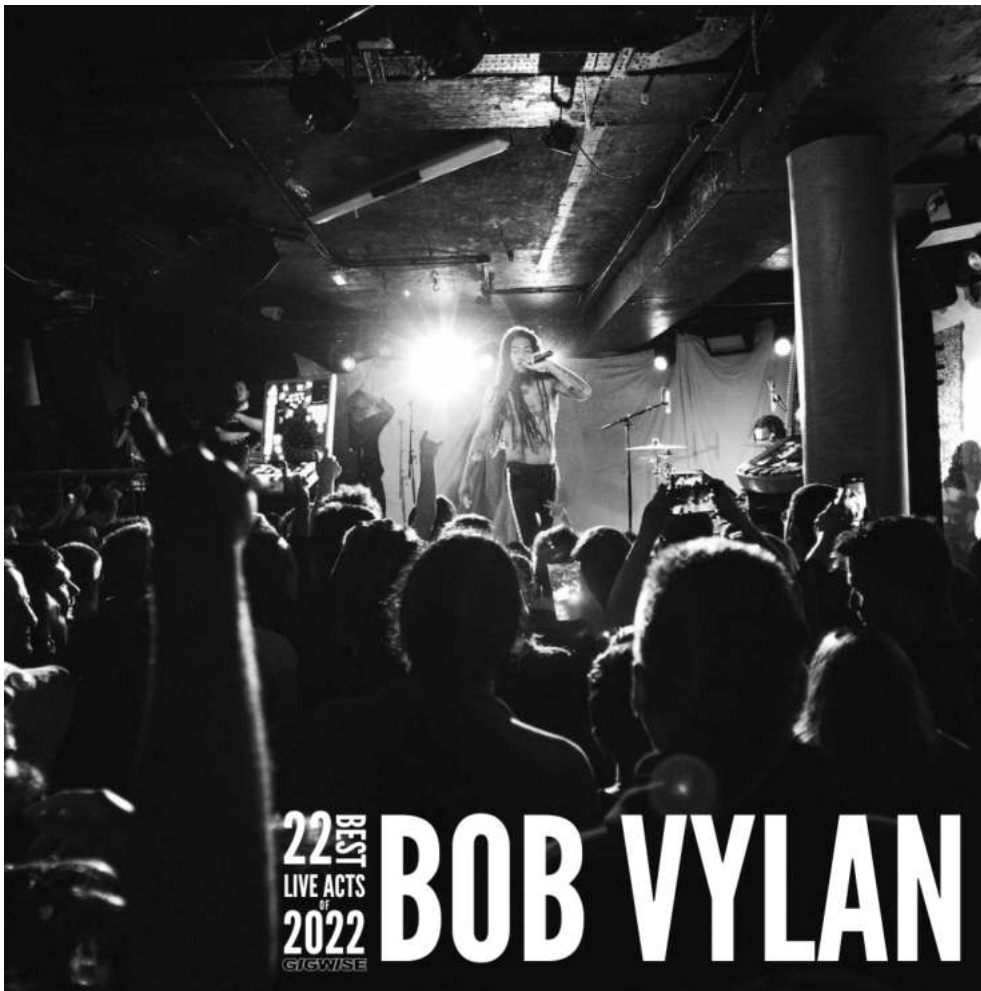
14. HAIM

Danielle, Este and Alana are yet again everyone's favourite band consisting of three sisters straddling the line of indie-pop and doing it masterfully. It's been another massive year for HAIM, as they were finally able to set out on the road for the 'One More Haim' tour supporting their third album *Women in Music Pt. III*. They conquered the O2 Arena, having first performed there in support of Florence + the Machine ten years prior, and managed to bring Taylor Swift out of her live performance pseudo-retirement for the debut of 'Gasoline' on stage. The sisters rocked Glastonbury with an electrifying set, straight after a surprise appearance from Greta Thunberg. Iconic. - David Roskin



13. Kojey Radical

Everyone in the crowd at Brixton had been waiting a long time to see Kojey perform his ground-breaking debut LP 'Reason to Smile' live. What was originally a cancelled gig at Roundhouse, which then turned to a gig at Brixton Academy in March, which was then delayed to November, all came together for a night of poetic perfection. With a full backing band brandishing brass, strings and percussion, as well as backing singers and the choir of a word for word committed audience, every corner of Brixton Academy was packed with devoted energy. Not to mention, Kojey himself managed to convey a calm swagger paired with gratefulness to the crowd as he sung and rapped with vigour, nailing every word from songs new and old. Kojey Radical was certainly worth the wait. - Dale Maplethorpe



12. Bob Vylan

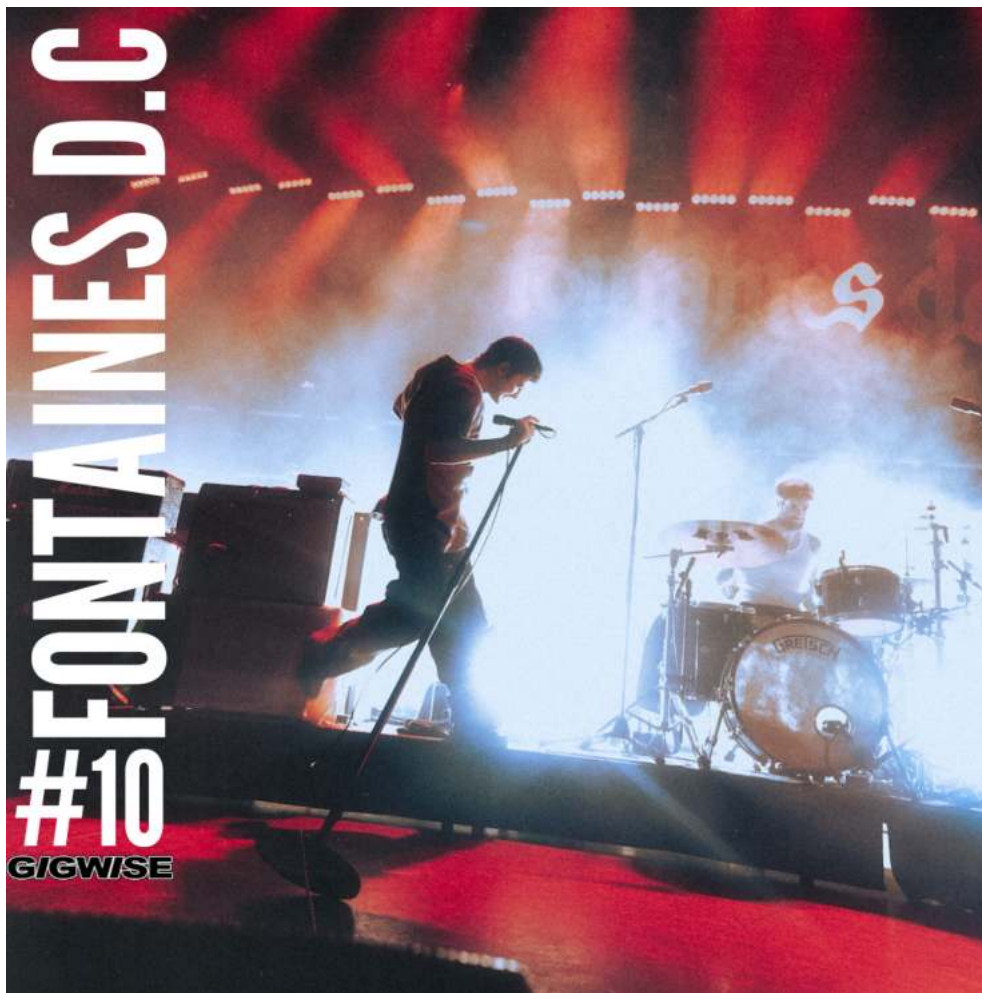
Walking over to Rock City for Bob Vylan's set at Dot-to-Dot festival earlier this year, I remember the trepidation amongst my friends. None of them were too familiar with the grime-punk duo at that point, other than knowing they were quite heavy and that their set may be a little too much for 5pm in the afternoon. Boy were they wrong.

Starting their performance with some meditative yoga to the sound of intense metal riffs, their 30-minute slot was nothing short of seismic. A full-force, high-energy whirlwind of wild mosh pits, constant crowd-surfing and liberating anti-establishment protesting, all orchestrated by the two Bobbies on stage and even at some points within the crowd. Me and my friends all emerged at the end in a sweaty state, but also grinning widely from ear to ear. The perfect festival set that earned them more than a few new fans – now next time have them headline. - Karl Blakesley



11. Rina Sawayama

If you aren't feeling the self-love when you walk into a Rina Sawayama concert, she won't let you leave the venue until you are. She's gone through some changes this year, moving from her nu-metal-tinged debut to pure pop bangers on her new album *Hold The Girl*, and every track is delivered with perfection on stage. At her Primavera Sound set this year, the audience was ecstatic. It was a true joy to see Rina celebrate herself and her fans as she firmly established herself as pop's next big thing. It will be an even greater joy to see her rise up and conquer even bigger stages next year. - Vicky Greer



10. Fontaines D.C

Make no mistake, Fontaines D.C. are currently one of the hottest live acts in the world right now. Having already built up a reputation since their 2019 *Dogrel* debut, the excellent new tunes from April's *Skinty Fia* provided another bow to their live arrow. During their November/December tour, the Dublin band raced through tunes from their first two albums before proving new songs like 'I Love You' and 'Jackie Down the Line' are as worthy of crowd participation as any of their early work. The standing sections of their gigs now resemble an even bigger mosh pit, their growing fanbase now collectively losing their shit more than ever before. This year saw Fontaines prove, once again, why they'll go down as one of the best bands this millennium. - Matthew McLister



9. Los Bitchos

Los Bitchos play 70s style cumbia mixed with surfy psychedelic instrumentals. But when they're on stage, there are two words that sum up their style more succinctly: rock stars. You can tell they're having the time of their lives on stage, creating a joyful atmosphere and immaculate vibes as they go. Though theirs is not music that you can sing along to, the audience are hooked on every note. There were bongos, King Gizzard covers, and tunes dedicated to Lindsay Lohan – what else can you ask for? Los Bitchos spent a massive amount of time on the road this year, so be sure to catch them next time they're in town. - Vicky Greer



8. Let's Eat Grandma

Let's Eat Grandma are all grown up now, but their live show still manages a kind of childlike energy complete with jumping up and down, macarenas, tantrums and handshakes. Spending near enough the whole year touring and playing, their *Two Ribbons* shows were a greatest hits tour of their discography, mixing newer tracks in with old faves like 'Hot Pink'. From the second they step on stage and bounce into 'Happy New Year', the scene is set for a technically-tight, high-energy show that sees Rosa and Jenny somehow balance about 10 instruments between them, swapping hands on synths, passing the mic to each other and still managing to dance. It's the sort of show where you look around and absolutely everyone is smiling, hooked on any silly little movement and wowed by the skill of it all. - Lucy Harbron



7. CMAT

In years to come, those who managed to catch Irish singer-songwriter CMAT in concert in 2022 are going to be the envy of everybody around them. Hearing her soundcheck a capella at Leisure Festival this summer was an experience in and of itself - her live vocals are powerful and impeccable. And on top of this, she's got enough charisma to fill Trafalgar Square. Whether accompanied by her band or seen on her own with an acoustic guitar, the cowgirl is a force to be reckoned with. - Molly Marsh



6. My Chemical Romance

2022 brought us My Chemical Romance's reunion tour and it had everyone reaching for their eye-liner. Kicking off at the Eden Project, the tour saw the band play some huge venues - from stadiums to fields - and their latest setlist was all that anybody could talk about. Oozing with nostalgia, My Chemical Romance's live sets transported us back to 2006 - with the New Jersey rockers knocking back signature tracks from their career at ease, despite not having toured together in a decade. When a band who were so vital to your teenage years reunite, there's the worry that they won't live up to the high expectations that you've set for them, but seeing thousands of people pumping their fists in the air during 'Welcome to the Black Parade' was enough proof that this certainly isn't the case with My Chemical Romance. - Laura Dean



5. Kendrick Lamar

Based off his dazzlingly theatrical and instantly iconic Glastonbury headline set over the summer, you had to know that Kendrick's latest tour production was going to be quite the spectacle. However even with high expectations going in, Kendrick still managed to leave his captive arena audience thoroughly in awe of his greatness. Steaming through a mountain of his greatest hits from all eras and pulling out all the production stops including a ventriloquist dummy, some stunning shadow art, a raised COVID quarantine box, along with plenty of pyrotechnics and his own dance troupe joining him throughout, the £100+ tickets ended up feeling like quite the bargain. - Karl Blakesley



4. MUNA

MUNA generates a type of magic at their live performances that is rarely replicated elsewhere. Each venue is brimming with beautiful queer beings coming together to witness an emotional catharsis from its three members, revelling in the freedom to be our truest selves. MUNA's on-stage energy is electric, and at points downright chaotic, but all in all 100% authentic to who they are i.e. the "greatest band in the world".

A set highlight includes 'Home By Now', not just because of its palpable rhythms and undertones of queer-yearning, but because when we as a crowd look to each other and belt the words: "Would we be home by now?" we realise then and there that for us queers, this is our home. - Jordan White



3. Nova Twins

After gaining nods from the Mercurys and MOBOS and winning the AIM and Kerrang Awards, urban punks Nova Twins are smashing the live circuit after euphoric, kick-ass sets at Glastonbury and across the globe. They have captured the zeitgeist, reinventing the Riot Grrrl scene, whilst channeling Sister Rosetta Tharpe, they play ferocious riffs over distorted mics to the joy of the mosh pit. They play with precision, control and fierce elegance, pushing their instruments to their limits, filling every space with bass heavy buzzsaw riffs, thundering percussion and magnetic, grime, blending staccato melodies horrorcore hip-hop, rave-punk, nu-metal, grunge and electro-punk. They are a band that effortlessly smash and fuse the genres, championed by Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello who said that they are "incredible" and "deserve to be huge." Get a shot of euphoria at your nearest Nova Twins gig. - Carmel Walsh-Davighi



2. Confidence Man

It's safe to say not many bands captured live music quite as well as the Aussie 4-piece Confidence Man did. From their absolutely huge Glastonbury performance to THREE sold out nights in both London and Manchester, 2022 belonged to Confidence Man. Why wouldn't it though? Ringleaders Janet Planet and Sugar Bones bring so much energy to the stage it is genuinely ridiculous! Just see them performing 'Holiday' at Glastonbury or their cover of the DJ Sammy banger (itself a cover) 'Heaven'.

Not many bands have the swagger and confidence to come on stage to the Macarena either – more bands should do silly things – in big ol' Talking Heads style suits before multiple costume changes including light up bras, zebra print, and so much more. There's no surprise they've already been announced for a lot of festivals next summer considering their whole damn vibe live is just pure unadulterated fun. - Josh Williams



1. Self Esteem

2021 may have been Self Esteem's breakout year, as her second album *Prioritise Please* was included in every 'best albums of the year' list that mattered and her singles dominated the parallel song rankings. But 2022 was truly the year she asserted herself as a staple across the live circuit. This year she took the album on the road, stopping at almost every festival imaginable, racing around Europe for some iconic performances. Now we know a Self Esteem show comes with incredible custom outfits, empowering messages blazoned behind her, fiery dancers, and absolutely insane vocals teetering on ethereal and unreal. Her Glastonbury performance was one for the ages, and her subsequent tour had fans scrambling for tickets like gold dust, essentially having to triple her tour to meet demand. Polishing off over 30 live appearances in the summer alone, she never falters even under the weight of an unimaginably exhausting schedule. The devil works hard, but Rebecca Lucy Taylor works harder. - David Roskin

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