Today, July 16, 2020, is D Day for the Live Event Industry. Today is the moment in time when we collectively begin the final push to work with our Congresspeople and Senators to assure that our industry is able to survive into 2021. On March 12th when this anomaly of COVID 19 invaded us, our world shut down in a moment. Most of us believed that we would be back to normal in 30 to 90 days. So, we all quietly followed instructions, shut down, gathered our resources, and went into an imposed hibernation. As we moved to the end of June and the reality of the situation became apparent, everyone was forced to take a serious look at their own circumstance as it related to the truth that our industry was still completely shuttered.

I had previously written that June 30 would be a day when the future of Live Events for 2020 would be clearly defined. Much like anticipating the Superbowl or the World Cup, I believed a final result would occur. We would have a definitive answer. I never saw what happened coming. A tie. None of us could imagine nor would we accept a tie in the Superbowl or The World Cup. But with the COVID 19 virus, we have been handed a tie. There is not a clear winner or a clear path. The US and indeed the world is split on what path to take going forward. Do we shut or do we open? Schools, churches, restaurants, theaters, malls, stores, sports and yes, venues and events. Where we sit medically has been interpreted in several different ways. You may feel your perception is correct, but other people have different perceptions. Thus, the political situation is equally confusing. The medical and the political situation are intertwined now and there is no 100% agreement on a path forward. Perhaps I was foolish to believe it was as simple as open or shut.

This is what we do know now. The likelihood of events reopening to a significant level in the next 3 to 4 months is very low. Thus, to a point, we do have a decision. How many times have you asked your boss a question and gotten no answer? The non answer is an answer. In this case, the lack of a clear path to reopening means we remain shuttered. That is where we are. It does not matter why. That is just where we are. We are still in the quicksand and need to focus on getting out rather than how we got here.

This leads us to today, D Day. In the last four months I have gotten to know many of you. I have made hundreds of new friends. I have heard your wants, needs, concerns and fears. We have become like the soldiers in the landing crafts headed to Omaha Beach on D Day. The recent time together has made us one, and we are all staring at the cliffs on the beach ahead wondering how we survive. Together. So, all we have at this exact moment is each other and the strength of our size. Our time together has made us one, and in the next 10 days what we do will determine our fate. Together, we win. You know that. I know that. We know that. But we must all work in unison to achieve our goals and succeed.

The goal at this point is clear and simple. We have all made it to today through sheer grit and determination. We will make it to the end, but we cannot give up. We discovered along the way that we are indeed a band of gypsies with no real, strong, common voice in Washington DC. Think of us like a lot of children, and our Congresspeople and Senators are mom and dad. If we want something, we need to ask Mom and Dad. But we had no strong voice. We were but whispers in the wind.

In the last 12 weeks the various segments of the industry have pulled together, and we are all now on the same page, speaking the same language. As the events unfolded, we discovered that there was an organization with a large, loud voice in Washington. That organization is NAMM. The National Association of Music Merchandisers. They have long fought for their industry in Washington and indeed achieved great things. They have a staff, a focus, and a budget to achieve goals in Washington. They actually speak to Mom and Dad. They are heard.

Joe Lamond, the President of NAMM, has graciously agreed for NAMM to be the voice for the Live Event Industry at this time. Live Events are part of the fabric of what NAAM represents, and it is time Live Events became a part of and supported NAMM. I joined today! NAMM is now working on behalf of all of the music and Live Events industry and people in this time of need. As we invade the beachfront, NAMM is the tip of the spear. The NAMM lobbying team is working for us now.

Congress will be in session July 20 to August 8. In this session it is their intention to deliver the 4th and final COVID 19 Relief Bill. There will most likely be no more federal relief. Our industry needs two important items: Another round of PPP and a system of low interest long term loans, or Grants. Both items have been on the table and in discussion for weeks. There is bipartisan support for both, and all parties seem to indicate something will be worked out. This is meant to be targeted to only those industries that are still impacted and have no other way of survival. This is focused at Leisure and Hospitality, which we sit inside of. Restaurants, hotels, bars, gyms, and others also sit in this focused area.

There are two other issues of interest to all of us, but several other much larger industries are fighting those fights. Both Liability Indemnity and extension of Enhanced Unemployment are needed items going forward. Again, the popular theme on the street in DC is that some form of both of those will indeed be delivered. We leave those fights to others and focus on our two needs. The word on the street seems to have the Enhanced Unemployment to possibly end up in the $400 per week area, through the end of 2020.

As we begin this campaign what each of us needs to do is simple. One last time we need to e-mail our congresspeople and Senators and make the final ask. Attached there is a PDF letter from NAMM to send to your Senators as an attachment. You will also cut and past the below letter to use as the body of your letter.

Dear (fill in Senator and/or staffer name):

I write to bring your attention to challenges facing the live event industry and to urge the inclusion of targeted relief for the industry as Congress considers additional coronavirus relief measures this month.

Live event venues were among the first to close and will likely be the last to reopen. Workers in the live event sector were among the first to have their jobs disrupted, and they will be among the last to return to their jobs. By its very nature, live events work cannot be done from home. In recent decades, a significant and growing share of employment and economic activity has come from the business of “getting people together.” Live event venues — many of which are owned by local governments – generate millions in tax revenue and sustain jobs in communities across the country. Restaurants, hotels, retail stores, and other local businesses also directly benefit from the hundreds of millions of concerts, theater, festival, fair and eventgoers who attend millions of events each year. Events, both commercial and nonprofit, are central to our individual and collective identity. Live performance venues and the artists and workers in the industry are the lifeblood of the cultural and social identity of our neighborhoods. Social distancing, capacity limitations and other restrictions mean that the live event industry will not recover in any meaningful way until next year, and likely not until summer or later. It is impossible to operate in a viable manner at low capacity.

We appreciate the leadership Congress has shown by providing vital, short-term assistance with the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), expanding unemployment insurance eligibility to “gig” workers and the self-employed, and extending other relief. Businesses such as the live event industry that are facing prolonged closure, however, need additional help.

Due to the unique circumstances of our industry, we support industry-specific federal assistance through payroll support, tax relief, and loan guarantees. Allowing the hardest hit businesses with demonstrated losses to receive a second PPP loan would help, as would the bipartisan “RESTART Act” (S. 3814), which proposes seven-year, low-interest loans with deferred interest and principal repayments.

Sincerely,

NAME
Title, company
City, state

Unlike in the past, we have provided a list of the e-mails of the Chief of Staff and Legislative Director for every Senator. It is of the utmost importance that you contact the Senators this way, as the e-mail to the Chief of Staff and Legislative Director is the shortest route. For the Congresspeople, you will need to enter via their general portal found at [*https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials*](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials). You will then need to cut and paste the above letter into the box provided. It is critical you contact your Senators and Congresspeople as soon as is possible. We need the weight of this communication to arrive with our leaders before Monday. In this way, we will have made thousands of unified asks for the much-needed relief. Our strength is in numbers. Provide this letter to every friend, employees, associate, client, or other entity or person you can. Today through Sunday we are assaulting the beach at Normandy as we begin our push to victory.

To end on a positive note, two potential vaccines, Moderna mRNA 1273 and AstraZeneca AZN1222 both released phenomenal news in the last 24 hours. Both have had significant positive results. Both have indicated a possibility of a vaccine this year. Moderna has said as early as November, and AstraZeneca has said possibly by September. You can go online and read the details, but both have released very promising news which would translate into a quicker opening for everything, including the Live Event Industry.

I want to thank all of you for what you do, and for your dedication and effort. It has been phenomenal. I will keep you updated as several of us continue to work behind the scenes in the next few weeks. There is no task more important at this moment. This is all to assist the people and the companies. Without the people, there are no companies. Each one of you is important. Do not forget all of this is available to free-lance workers as well as W2 people.

Thank you all very much and let us push onto victory in 2020.

Michael T. Strickland

Chair

Bandit Lites