

PERFORMING & TOURING

RESOURCES

Live Performance & Production Glossary

BY ASTRID HOLZ, LIVE SOUND ENGINEER & MUSIC DIRECTOR

Live Performance & Production Glossary

PERFORMING & TOURING



This resource provides a glossary of live performance and production terms, helping artists understand industry language, technical setup, and show-day processes.

We know that the live music world can be info-heavy and full of jargon – from cables and consoles to contracts and crew roles, it's easy to feel overwhelmed when you're just starting out. To help cut through the confusion, here's a little cheat sheet of production terms, abbreviations, and slang that every artist should know.

This guide covers the essentials you'll encounter on tour and at gigs: gear and stage setup, audio and lighting systems, show-day logistics, crew roles, and industry shorthand. Whether it's understanding what a DI box does, why a setlist matters, or what a radius clause is in your contract, this will give you a quick reference so you can speak the same language as your team and the venue.

Think of it as your backstage map! Helping you feel confident, prepared, and ready to focus on what really matters: your performance.

Advancing

This involves contacting a venue in advance of a gig to make them aware of a band's production requirements and discuss details. Gig advancing is the essential pre-event process of coordinating logistical, technical, and hospitality details between an artist (or tour manager) and a venue/promoter, typically occurring weeks or days before a show. It ensures smooth, error-free performances by confirming load-in times, soundcheck schedules, backline requirements, travel logistics, and payment details.

Amps

This describes the make, model, and number of amplifiers that are powering the speakers. Sound engineers may find this information useful when planning a show.

Backline

This is a detailed list of the drums, amplifiers and keyboard accessories that a venue provides for artists to use. Sometimes there is an additional cost to use these items.

BOH (Back of House)

(Abbreviation not usually spoken, but often written down), meaning anywhere behind the stage or out of the public eye of the venue.

Breakables

Parts of a drum kit that can be broken - this usually refers to cymbals, but can also include a snare and sometimes a kick pedal.

Cap

Abbreviation for capacity - the number of people that a venue can safely fit into a venue.

Comp

A "Free Ticket" or "Guest Ticket".

Deads / Empties

Empty cases for equipment, for example empty hard cases that were protecting amps are often called "deads".

Live Performance & Production Glossary

PERFORMING & TOURING

DI (Direct Inject unit)

Allows keyboards, acoustic guitars, and other instruments that have a “Jack” or “TS” cable output to be plugged into the PA. It can eliminate hum from power issues and internally converts an “unbalanced” signal to a “balanced” signal, allowing a mixing console to amplify a cleaner signal.

Door Split

As an alternative to a “Guarantee” fee structure, a door split is where all artists/bands on a lineup take a split of the ticket sales for the event. Usually a venue will also take a portion of this split. These splits can be at different or equal percentages depending upon the deal.

FOH (Front of House) Console

This is the make and model of the mixing console that is sitting in front of the stage, or “Front of House”. It is important for any audio engineer to know before they go into a venue with a band what mixing console is available. The make and model determines how many microphones can be plugged in, how many foldback or IEM mixes are possible, and if FX such as reverb are available.

Gaff

Gaffer tape.

Guarantee

A fixed fee paid to an artist for performing at a venue – it is not dependent on ticket sales.

Headliner

The headliner is usually the band that plays last at the show and is the lead band on the lineup.

HH

Abbreviation for “Hand Held”, usually referring to a wireless microphone.

IEM Whip

Refers to the small, flexible vertical rod antennas commonly used with wireless in-ear monitor systems and microphones.

IEMS

In-ear monitors. This usually refers to the whole IEM system. The headphones are called “buds”, the wireless receiver pack is the “IEM Pack” or “IEM RX”, and the transmitter box is the “IEM TX”.

Input List

A detailed document included in a production rider listing every microphone, instrument, and DI that needs to be connected to a mixing console for a live show. It maps each sound source to specific channels so the sound engineer knows what to prepare.

Jack to Jack / TS Cable / Guitar Cable

A 1/4 inch unbalanced cable mostly used for plugging guitars and keyboards into amps (TS stands for “Tip Sleeve”).

Lighting

A list of lighting fixtures may be provided on a venue production spec. Smaller venues may list whether they have a hazer or projector available.

Lighting Console

Describes the make and model of the console that controls the lighting fixtures in the venue.

Linecheck

A very short version of a soundcheck, generally just to make sure everything plugged into the PA is working and the band can hear themselves adequately. There is usually not enough time for the band to play a full song.

Load In / Load Out

The time (and sometimes location) that an artist brings their equipment into and out of the venue.

Main Support

The band playing just before the headliner.

Live Performance & Production Glossary

PERFORMING & TOURING

Megadeck / Staging

A list of risers or tables that can be utilised by artists for things like DJ tables or drum risers.

Merch

Merchandise.

Mic (Pronounced "Mike")

Microphone.

Mic (Microphone) Kit

A list of all microphones and DI boxes available to use at a venue.

Mic (Microphone) Stands

Lists the number of microphone stands available at the venue.

Mixing Console / Mixer / Console

Equipment that allows multiple audio sources such as microphones and instruments to be mixed together to create a balanced sound for the audience.

MONs (Monitor Console)

The mixing console used to control the monitor mixes on stage so band members can hear themselves.

Opener

The first band to perform at the event.

Performance Reports

Submissions made by musicians to claim royalties for live performances of songs. In Australia, this is lodged through APRA AMCOS.

Playback Engineer

The person responsible for setting up and controlling backing tracks.

Power

Describes the type of electrical power available for the band in the venue.

Processing

Describes the audio processors available in the venue used to shape and balance sound.

Production Rehearsal

Often held in a live music venue, this rehearsal involves setting up the band with full microphones, monitors and PA similar to a real show.

Production Specs

A document provided by a venue to an artist outlining what equipment is available at the venue.

Punter

An audience member.

Radius Clause

A clause in performance contracts restricting bands from performing nearby within a certain time period around the show date.

Rider

Often refers to the hospitality rider – a list of requests made by artists for food and drink backstage.

Setlist

A list of songs an artist intends to play at a gig.

Settlement

The final financial reconciliation between a performer and venue after a live show.

Shells

Another name for the physical drums in a drum kit (kick drum and toms).

Live Performance & Production Glossary

PERFORMING & TOURING

Shout Mic / Talkback

A microphone used by the sound engineer to communicate with the band on stage.

SM58

The most common vocal microphone in the world, made by Shure.

Soundcheck

Time allocated to a band to test their on-stage sound and allow the sound engineer to prepare a mix before the audience enters.

Speakers

Describes the make, model and number of loudspeakers present in the venue.

Spike

Marking positions on stage with tape so equipment can quickly be returned to the correct position.

Stage Box

A physical box on stage where microphones and instruments plug in before sending signals to the mixing console.

Stage Plot

A diagram showing the layout of musicians, instruments and equipment on stage.

Stagehand

A technician who helps set up, move and pack down equipment on stage.

Staging

Refers to risers and other platforms on stage.

Strike

To remove something from the stage.

TM (Tour Manager)

The logistical and administrative manager for a touring artist or band.

TRS / 1/4 Inch Balanced Cable

Looks like a guitar cable but has an extra ring on the plug, making it balanced and suitable for connecting audio equipment to speakers or consoles.



Looking for more resources?
Find more resources like this
one at musicnsw.com/resources

MusicNSW works, creates and listens on unceded Aboriginal land across the state. We honour elders past and present and acknowledge all First Nations peoples as the original music makers, storytellers and knowledge holders. Always was, always will be.

Cover photo by Dylan Patamisi

MusicNSW is supported by Sound NSW. Visit our website at musicnsw.com or find our socials at @musicnsw. Copyright © 2026 MusicNSW. All rights reserved.

music **N** **s** **w**