



Artistic Selection Policy

English Folk Expo's programmes are informed by the ambition for talent development and growth alongside advocacy / brand recognition and audience development for the English folk, roots and acoustic community.

Manchester Folk Festival

Manchester Folk Festival's artistic policy is to present relevant, high quality folk, roots and acoustic music which engages new audiences. In particular seeking out and supporting artists pursuing innovation within the artform. The programme seeks to present a broad range of artists to sustain audiences across multiple venues each day. Our brand, choice of venues and marketing strategy work together to present individual artists and the programme as a whole to shift audience development within the folk music industry.

Beyond the direct public benefit, a key role of the festival is to showcase English artists and music to industry professionals. The festival's place within Manchester's arts and cultural landscape is also a main factor which dictates a programme that can refresh each year and prioritise the relevance and quality of the live music experience. The festival has the capacity to influence and challenge the viewpoint and relationship with English folk and acoustic music of local communities, UK festivals, venues and international festivals.

Relevance can mean producing new product or representing traditional work which resonates with current day social issues. Folk music as a means to tell stories and connect audiences and communities is of particular relevance for Greater Manchester; personal stories which reflect on social change.

Our focus is on presenting English born artists or artists who reside in England. In addition through EFX Showcase we partner with a country or region each year to present international artists. Within the programme of English born or resident artists we strive for a diversity of programme which will ensue an accessible and inclusive offer for all. This includes cultural diversity, gender equality, artists with disabilities and socio economic barriers.

The festival is committed to a minimum number of artists presenting as part of the showcase element. There are a range of venue sizes and formats which enables the festival to support artists at all stages of career. All artists are paid to take part with opportunity for emerging artists at every concert.

Our process for artist selection

An open call for artists takes place November to February with final programme for the festival published in March each year.

Decisions on the programme are taken considering the festival brand as outlined above to sustain an innovative and developing programme with public attendance at individual concerts.

The open call provides the following specification for applying artists:

To qualify to showcase artists should be:

- 1) Resident in England OR English by birth
- 2) Perform folk, roots or acoustic music
- 3) Be Export Ready:
 - a. Artists can demonstrate experience of regular live performances across the UK and potentially beyond
 - b. Have released an album in the past 24 months or are planning to release an album in the next 12 months. They must be able to demonstrate knowledge of distributing and promoting



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- recorded music, including physical and digital distribution channels both in the UK and internationally.
- c. Have a team in place to cover the roles of manager, booking agent, label and distributor. Where an artist is self-representing, they must be able to demonstrate knowledge of these areas.
 - d. Have a quality, multiplatform and up to date online presence, relevant to target market.
 - e. Can articulate a strategy for developing their career and how performing in a new territory supports their career progression.

All artists receive feedback on their applications.

Final programming decisions are taken by the Artistic Director with shortlisting November to February involving a wider group including EEx staff and board, English Folk Song and Dance Society, HOME and other partners.

Factors in addition to the above taken into account include previous appearances at MFF/ EEx and public performance in the Greater Manchester area.

Financial offers to artists are based on individual show budgets with full projected income and costings shared. All offers are at least minimum levels recommended by Musicians Union.

Other Festivals

English Folk Expo also curates other festivals including the Rochdale Folk Festival.

In all of our other festival work, we will prioritise local heritage and identity. The Rochdale Folk Festival will be a celebration of locality and will ensure that a theme of the event is around music grounded in Rochdale and surrounding areas.

However, we also use Rochdale Folk Festival as a vehicle to support the next wave of music industry professionals and so our Promoter Training Programme cohort will curate shows at this festival. It is important that we guide and support their selection, but that the choice is ultimately theirs to make.

Selection for artists at Rochdale Folk Festival and other similar future events will be driven through our Artistic Director in consultation with the board and management team.

Promotions

Throughout the year, we will present one-off promoted concerts. These concerts present the best artists which we may not otherwise be able to provide for the public benefit at any of our festivals. By way of an example, we may want to present artists who are not resident in England or English by birth, or who may not be eligible for another reason. The promotions programme will enable us to present a wider range of high quality artists for the public benefit whilst providing financial stability for the rest of the organisation. These decisions are made between by Artistic Director following consultation with senior EEx staff and board.

Other artist selection

For all other artist selection, we will endeavor to use a process of Open Calls. The process for Open Calls will be the same as for the Manchester Folk Festival selection but with differing timelines.

On occasion, we may have additional minimum application qualifications including proof of existing audience reach or residency in a specific geographical region.