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Study Recommends Strategies to Advance Pittsburgh’s Music Industry

1,800 Local Music People Participated in The Pittsburgh Music Ecosystem Study

PITTSBURGH (July 19, 2018) -- The release of the [Pittsburgh Music Ecosystem Study](#) is an ambitious starting point for enhancing Pittsburgh’s local music industry. The landmark report provides a comprehensive audit of the local music scene, as well as detailed recommendations to move the industry forward and more fully realize its potential for musicians, music businesses and the Pittsburgh region.

“Pittsburgh is home to many talented, hard-working musicians and legendary music fans,” explains 91.3 WYEP General Manager Abby Goldstein. “Yet, musicians and venues struggle to make a living, and this part of our local culture needs to be valued and recognized. There are barriers that have held the music scene back from achieving that recognition, and we commissioned this study because we want that to change.”

Spearheaded by 91.3 WYEP, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP) and the City of Pittsburgh, the study was conducted by Sound Music Cities, LLC, and supported by The Heinz Endowments and the Henry L. Hillman Foundation. It is the outcome of an intensive 10-month process, including interviews, a town-hall meeting and online survey with more than 1,800 members of the region’s music community, civic leaders and others.

“The Pittsburgh Music Ecosystem Study provides tremendous opportunities for Pittsburgh’s music community, and for our entire region,” says Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto. “It is a blueprint for building the kind of thriving music scene that can enliven the texture of neighborhoods, attract visitors, workforce talent and business investment, and build our reputation as a creative, energetic community.”

Building a More Vibrant Music Ecosystem in Pittsburgh

The study describes Pittsburgh’s music industry as a “music ecosystem” and reveals the complex network of creative and business professionals who create musical output in the region.

“For the members of Pittsburgh’s music community, knowing they are part of an interconnected system can be powerful,” explains SMC’s Don Pitts, the study’s author. “There is opportunity in working together, and with other community leaders. Pittsburgh’s music ecosystem faces complex issues, but solid progress can be made over time, especially if music people are allowed to lead and given the additional skills they need to lead effectively.”

(more)

The study provides detailed strategies for long-term development in five essential areas:

- *Leadership Development*—The music ecosystem needs to be involved in the issues that affect it, as individuals and as an industry. Recommendations include leadership training and an industry-wide change initiative to grow collective impact on policy, economic development and more.
- *Career Development*—In an industry that relies on the creative output of its workforce, initiatives such as a professional development pipeline for musicians or grant programs to help musicians develop their musical and business skills can have positive creative and economic impact.
- *Regulatory Reform*—In Pittsburgh and neighboring jurisdictions, permitting, regulations and taxes are a top concern for venue operators and can limit opportunities for live music—and music jobs. The study encourages the music ecosystem to participate in re-thinking these public policy issues, and suggests new approaches, such as a best-practices sound management strategy.
- *Industry Development*—Pittsburgh’s music ecosystem is comprised of a deep and diverse network of musicians, genres and professional service providers. But more can be done to mentor and connect industry sub-sectors via publishing, recording, labels, touring, programming and marketing.
- *Audience Development*—Local musicians need more fans and opportunities grow and engage with that fanbase. The study details strategies to upgrade and add venues, shift public perceptions, grow participation and communicate the value of Pittsburgh’s local music scene.

“There are no quick fixes, the challenges are complex, but ongoing focus on the study’s insights and recommendations can yield dramatic progress,” says PDP’s Russell Howard. “It’s critical that the music industry and civic leaders from across our neighborhoods and communities come together to move forward and produce positive results.” The report is being distributed to music people, civic leaders and other stakeholders; a music community networking event is being planned for mid-August.

Study Identifies Challenges—and Reasons for Optimism

The study is filled with insights into the state of Pittsburgh’s music ecosystem, from the frustration and struggle experienced by many local musicians and music businesses to important core strengths and reasons for optimism. Just some of the study’s findings about Pittsburgh’s music ecosystem:

- It encompasses 43 different areas of skills and experience, from songwriter, live performer and event producer to studio engineering, venue management and record label
- 56% of creatives have at least a bachelor’s degree; 10% earn \$35,000 or more from music
- 69% earn less than \$10,000 per year from music; 50% did 10 or fewer gigs in Pittsburgh last year
- 2/3 of venues believe audience interest in local music has increased or stayed the same

Focus groups noted core strengths, such as diverse neighborhood music scenes, activity across a wide diversity of genres, a good mix of venues, opportune geographic location, lots of festivals, passionate audiences, deep expertise among professional music industry service providers and more.

“The study offers a thoughtful approach that balances the needs of neighborhoods, venues and musicians,” adds Allison Harnden, the City of Pittsburgh’s Nighttime Economy Manager. “It includes workable best practices to help solve problems before they happen.”

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Visit www.pghmusicproject.org to read the study, including an infographic and executive summary.