

How the events and entertainment industry can rebuild post-lockdown - Q&A with Steve Cuzen of Howler

 By Ruth Cooper

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The Covid-19 lockdown has drastically changed the local live events and entertainment industry. Now that the country is entering lockdown Level 1, the question is: How can the industry be brought back from life support? We chat to Steve Cuzen, chief operating officer at ticketing company [Howler](#), about reviving and rebuilding the South African events and entertainment industry and touch on the emergence of virtual events.



Steve Cuzen

■ ***How eager or cautious do you think South Africans will be to attend live events again?***

South Africans have been very eager to get back to events and this has been evident through the number of limited capacity events that have been selling out quickly, despite fears of Covid. Many South Africans are looking to get back to 'normal' events, however, the reality is that we are in a new normal. Others will take a bit of time getting back into the swing of things, cautiously.

■ ***What measures or tools do event producers have in place to deal with any event-goers who show symptoms of Covid-19? What happens if someone contracts the coronavirus because of attending an event?***

It all begins with limiting capacity and hosting events outdoors to present as low of a risk as possible. Our digital ticketing solution ensures that a promoter will not oversell their event and they can manage capacity by government regulations.

Currently, all restaurants need to screen any patrons, so do events. To make it more streamlined, we have integrated our screening solution Keep.Out.Covid, which will pre-screen attendees online before an event to further protect those attending the event; this process also ensures that attendees arrive wearing a mask.



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■ ***Is the 50% venue capacity cap feasible for event producers or will they have to possibly look at getting a bigger venue to offset production costs with ticket sales? Do you see a general increase in ticket pricing?***

Event producers are going to have to finely balance their pricing of tickets to ensure that they do not lose customers' interest in their events. Naturally, ticket prices are going to see a slight increase and each event will be a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of that event; a drive-in, a more intimate event experience, or full-on festival, with limited numbers of course.

■ ***Will South Africans continue to stream live content with live events now being permitted or will we see a unique mix of physical and livestreamed events?***

As Howler, we certainly believe that livestreaming, especially around events is here to stay. During lockdown Level 3, we researched livestreaming in South Africa to see if there was a market, and we found that there certainly is. Whilst the market is still in its infancy, limited by factors such as high data costs, we foresee many event producers using the hybrid model of hosting a physical event that also has a streaming element to this.

Reason being that it is a great way to increase profits for an event, it bridges the divide between cities, now a person in Durban and Cape Town can attend an event such as Afropunk, watching it from the comfort and safety of their home.



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■ ***What have been some of the trends you have seen when it comes to livestreaming?***

Through the research that we conducted, we saw a 40% increase in online streaming of events over four months, this being a service that before Covid, very few of us even thought of using. Some of the trends we saw were that live music and entertainment were unsurprising top of the stream charts, but very surprising was online education.

We found that live music was the most popular choice for online streaming, but education and learning were the highest paid-for category for online events, reaching up to R200+ per ticket. We also found 47% of respondents had paid online during lockdown of which 89% felt those events were good value for money.

■ ***How do you see the events industry innovating to survive these difficult times?***

Online streaming is the one way that organisers have continued to hold events, but South Africans are very entrepreneurial so now that the restrictions have been slightly lifted they will adapt their events to make sure they fit in with the current regulations while still providing that much-needed live entertainment we all miss. Even if it means breaking up their events across multiple venues, we will find a way to make it work.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

Ruth is the production manager at Bizcommunity. ruth@bizcommunity.com

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