

ARTIST BOOKINGS

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1. How to book a headline artist

There's not really a set way on how to go about booking an artist. There are lots of different approaches to it, and it will depend on who the artist is, who you're dealing with, what the show is, etc. The following is a few of the various approaches you can take.

Stock standard approach to an agent/manager

Lots of bigger 'headline' bands will have a booking agent to represent them. Contact them about the band, and ask what the band is up to – are they releasing? Touring? Doing any other similar gigs? Keep things in writing. Agents are paid to get good fees for their bands; good agents get ridiculous fees for their bands. When giving an initial quote they will often just test the waters and throw something stupid out there to see if you bite (unless you've dealt with them lots before), so don't be afraid to negotiate.

A friend of a friend's band

This is always a good approach. If you know someone, or someone you know knows someone, or one of the FReeZA committee knows someone.....this is a great head start. It will potentially mean easier dealings, and a reduced fee. Be careful though that they don't take you for granted.

A band someone else has used successfully

If it's worked for someone else, then there's no reason it couldn't work for you. Ask other FReeZA groups, local venues etc. See which bands have pulled good numbers. Do your research. Steal ideas.. everyone in the biz does!

Get bands/agents to approach you

Send an email to agents with details of your proposed show, and then get them to throw ideas at you. You could say straight up... 'we have a budget of \$3k for a headliner, and \$500 for a support'. Then you can get the agent to do the work for you, and throw some suggestions together. You will still do your research though. Just because an agent says they're an awesome band who can pull 500, doesn't mean they will.

Finding a support band

If looking for supports, you may open up an application process. Get local bands to submit an application via an online form and get their links (use Survey Monkey, etc). Share the applications around with the committee and see who they think. This will keep things fair, and get a good cross-section of local talent applying.

A few general tips when approaching a band/agent and submitting offers

After you've discussed with an agent, always go away and have a think about it. Leave it a little while, like 24-48 hours. This does 3 things: 1) Lets you change your mind. 2) Lets you do some more research, and see who else is available. 3) Potentially gets the agent and/or band more interested in the gig.

Have your own budget in mind from the start. Try to figure out what a band is worth on your own. Ask around. Check out where they're playing and go see them. If they pulled 200 people to the Northcote Social Club on a \$20 ticket then they're only pulling in \$4k (less expenses). They might only clear \$2-3k for that gig. Also keep in mind that these gigs are 18+ so don't always reflect a bands U18 pulling power.

If you decide that you're interested and want to try to book the artist, make contact again and get an idea on price from them (unless you do this right at the start, but as per last point, having done your research you should already have a rough idea). Whatever price the agent says will more often be more than what they really want.

NEGOTIATE! Don't accept what they ask for straight up. Do your maths, figure out what you want to pay, what you think they're worth, and then submit an offer to the agent that is less than that amount. For example: They ask for \$5k, but you're happy to pay \$3-4k, so offer them \$2.5k.

Keep everything in writing when you're talking terms (money and things like production). If you talk terms on the phone, follow up straight away with an email – especially when it comes to locking in terms. Submit your official offer via email. If you talk on the phone, just say "let me email you through an offer". The offer could look something like this...

- \$5,000+GST (always specify re. GST)
- 1 x 60min performance (or however long you want)
- 1 x meet & greet after the show (if you want them to do it, make it part of the deal)
- Production supplied (or not – depends on your venue, etc)
- Backline supplied (or not)
- Accommodation supplied (or not)
- Travel supplied, eg. flights/ground transport (or not)
- Hospitality supplied (or not – eg. you may provide dinner, or rider with no alcohol)

If they've agreed to the terms, make sure you get their acceptance in writing. If they ring you and say "yep let's do it", ask them to email you back confirming. This is then a much more solid agreement as it's in writing and legally, your email conversation with offer and acceptance is a binding contract.

Contract them. Basically just putting everything you've agreed to during negotiations on paper, and get them to sign it. Include terms and conditions regarding behaviour/FReeZA/riders etc..... basically anything you expect of the band needs to be in here. You can also include extra info about the gig, production specs, backline specs, contacts etc. [You can find an example of a band contract on The Push website.](#)

Pay a deposit. Some agents will ask for it so you'll have to anyway. Paying a deposit can be a good thing as it makes your contract more rock solid as the band will already have 10-50% of their fee. It also can help some interstate bands pay for travel and accommodation. Don't pay 100% prior though, even if the agent tries to ask for it all upfront. If you absolutely have to, make sure it's via a Trust Account where you pay it into account and it doesn't get released to them until after the gig.

2. Types of Performance Fee Deals

Guarantee

Just a straight guarantee that you will pay a set amount of money, no matter what (even if you have 4 people show up to the gig).

Guarantee, plus _____

Could be guarantee plus a % of door takings, or guarantee plus \$x per ticket sold, or guarantee plus \$x for every person through door (good for free shows), or guarantee plus % of pre-sales, plus % of door-sales (higher % for pre sales to encourage them to push pre-sale tickets and promote more before).

Guarantee vs _____

You will guarantee to pay a set amount of money (eg. \$1000) or a % or cut of the takings (similar to above examples). Whichever works out the most \$ is what you pay. Eg. \$1000 vs 50% of door on a \$10 ticket and you have 400 payers. 50% of door would be \$2000, so you would pay this. If only 100 payers (50% would be \$500), you pay \$1000. This can work well in encouraging the band to promote the show, as they have potential to make more money if they do.

3. Reasons why you would (or wouldn't) book an artist

In reality, there are a million reasons to book a band, or to not book a band. It all comes down to things like venue, audience, target audience, money, personalities, style, etc. There is no right or wrong. Remember what works in one area may not work in another. Here's a list of things to do or consider when making your decision.

Do your research - ask your committee, ask them to ask their mates, ask venues, promoters, festivals, and other FReeZA providers. Read reviews of their live shows (a lot of music blogs post live reviews these days). Check them out. YouTube is a great place to research a band, as you can see what they're like, and possibly what the crowd is like at their shows.

Do they get played on radio? If they claim to have been played on radio or are on rotation, verify this by googling the radio station's set list. Getting played on high rotation is a lot different to being played once on a specialty program at 1am.

Try to predict who's going to be big by the time the gig comes around. If you organise the show in January, things can change for better or worse by gig time in July. Some artists can take a big dive into obscurity once they're off cycle, or some are completely unknown until they release their album which turns out to be HUGE.

Sometimes personalities can also come into it. Book a band if you know they're great, happy, easy-going, professional, you trust them, you know they can deliver, and they're easy to deal with.

4. How much to pay an artist?

The easiest way to answer this and the more important thing is.... how much do you want to pay an artist? Know your event, know your area, know your audience, know your budget, and then come up with your own answer. If an agent won't give you a quote, you can try to offer an artist what you want to pay. If it's not what they want, they will simply decline. If it's a little bit more than what they may be actually worth, but you think it's the right amount for you and your show, then it is.

As mentioned previously, agents are paid to get as much money from you as they can, so you need to negotiate. You can probably assume the agent is adding at least 20% onto the band's worth when they give you an initial price. Offer them less than what they ask for, and negotiate your deal.

Also factor in things like production, meals, and travel. These things can add up, and if you don't expect or budget for them, then a band could end up easily costing twice as much!

5. Riders

It's FReeZA and alcohol is obviously a no-go. Make sure the artist knows this. Most Victorian bands get it, but interstate ones who maybe haven't done a FReeZA gig before won't. Be clear about it. Also be clear about them not being under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst at the event or performing. PUT IT IN THE CONTRACT! Put simply: "If you're drunk, we won't pay you!" Include any terms regarding their behaviour too.

Some bands you will still need to give some hospitality to anyway. Just a platter or two, some nibbles, and some soft drink and water will often suffice, which will cost you around \$100-200 max. If they give you a rider with their contract, cross out the booze, but give them anything else.

If they're a bigger touring band, or if you're not too worried about money, an idea is to send them out to dinner at a local restaurant. Pre-book and let the restaurant know you'll pay the bill (organise to do this the following day/week), but not any alcohol. The band will probably enjoy this more, it may end up costing a similar amount, but the best bit is you don't have them hanging around at the venue all night, and there is far less mess to clean!

For further information or assistance, please contact The Push on (03) 9380 1277 or email push@thepush.com.au

