

Funding the Future

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My attention was drawn yesterday [to a fabulous blog](#) by the composer, conductor and musician, Howard Goodall which discusses Brexit and music. As he began:

A few weeks ago I had an encounter with a man at a currency exchange desk at Heathrow airport and tweeted the conversation thus:

“Nice bloke at Heathrow currency exchange desk asks whether Brexit will be good for my industry. When I said no, disastrous, he said he asks everyone the same question: and Every. Single. Person gives the same answer. But a bunch of Old Etonian conmen think they know better.”

It is my most read tweet ever (8500+ retweets, 18500+ likes and 1.67m impressions).

He then patiently, and with considerable skill, goes on to explain just what the problem of Brexit is for musicians, whose work is peripatetic by nature. I could summarise that with a single word, which would be 'visas'. But the issues are much more than the admin impediment to work in 27 countries that Brexit will create. As Goodall also notes, UK governments, and especially Conservative government have a poor track record in defending copyright holder rights, and for many musicians these are what they live off because their music can otherwise be exploited without payment. He says:

*So, as a composer of music that is disseminated all over the world I am extremely concerned that my interests will **not** be protected by our own government. History teaches us that Tories in government, with some honourable exceptions like former arts minister Ed Vaizey MP, are more interested in protecting the exploiters of creative work than in the people who create it in the first place.*

And then there is the issue of both book sales (which will now be harder to make from the UK to the EU, with lower margins) and documentary filmmaking, which will now probably require visas for crews working in the EU.

The point he makes is this:

It's important to note at this point that music is not a subsidiary, luxury, minor industry for the UK. We are the second biggest provider of music to the world after the USA.

Music is of enormous benefit to us as a country. That is a fact, not an opinion. Nor is it special pleading. For a modern, developed country to deliberately, wilfully strangle one of its lead exporters is bordering on insane. Indeed, the Creative Industries as a whole are the fastest-growing sector in our economy, worth last year just under £100bn to our national coffers (to put that in context, in 2016 the NHS cost us £115bn). The Creative Industries Federation are deeply concerned about the knock-on effects of Brexit on this sector and have published their concerns accordingly:

<https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/newsletter-archive/brexit-report-impact-leaving-eu-uks-creative-industries>

But it seems that no one in government is listening.

Goodall's whole piece is worth reading.

But more importantly, someone really does need to wake up this morning and listen to the music and take note. We are committing the most extraordinary act of economic self-harm and the government is seemingly committed to it, come what may.