

My name is Steve Barney, and I am a professional drummer from the United Kingdom.

As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, I, like so many of my colleagues (musicians, dancers, engineers, crew and everyone else involved in live event production) lost virtually all of my income, despite having worked with some success in this business for over 25 years, as the touring drummer for Annie Lennox, Anastacia, Mike + The Mechanics, Jeff Beck, Eagle-Eye Cherry, Sugababes, Will Young and Hotei, amongst others.

In late March this year, I was offered a job as the touring drummer for an Italian artist, Gianna Nannini, an opportunity I accepted with open arms, not least because it was the first opportunity I had had to earn a living in the two years since my last live show. So far this year, we have toured through Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Monaco, and, of course, the UK. During the latter part of this tour, I was contacted by Anastacia's management to request my services for her upcoming three-month-long European tour. Having been her touring drummer for over twelve years and 500+ shows around the world, I was delighted to accept.

Thanks to the Covid-induced hiatus, 2022 has been the first year touring, post-Brexit, for me and many of my colleagues. I was vaguely aware of new rules and restrictions affecting travel within Europe but, for the most part, my tour with Gianna had been just as straightforward for me as pre-Brexit. However, as we began planning for Anastacia's tour, the subject of the 90/180-Day Rule came up. How many days, out of the last 180, had I spent within the Schengen Area..?

As it turned out, the answer to that question was 78 and, despite the best efforts of the production manager, Anastacia's manager, and myself, to obtain an extended Schengen visa, we were unable to do so because it turned out that such a thing does not exist! Once Management came to the conclusion that there were no legal means by which I could spend another three months in the Schengen Area, on another European tour, my offer of work was withdrawn and I lost my job of twelve years.

I am absolutely devastated, frustrated and angry. The loss of a place in this band is a massive blow to me financially, mentally, and creatively. Throughout my entire career, I have travelled freely across Europe without an egg timer counting down my time left and, ultimately, I now feel like I am being penalised professionally, simply for being British. Today, this is my sob story, however it will soon be that of every other British touring professional, if it's not already. This summer, 45% fewer British artists appeared on European festival stages, compared to pre-Brexit years 2017-2019. This has to change.

Without change, Britain's world-leading touring artists and crew are going to find themselves unemployed, *en masse*, because it is easier and cheaper for touring productions to employ foreign personnel, who are not subject to the same restrictions. We urgently need a single, Schengen-wide visa, restoring British touring professionals' ability to work. Not only is mine a British job that has been lost, but as European tours typically include the UK, I have even lost a British job, in Britain, for the UK leg of the tour.

I am apprehensive about the future, as we can no longer compete on a level playing field with our European counterparts. We are no longer competing on quality; we are being under-cut by necessity, if not convenience.

Many thanks for reading.

Steve Barney