

It is increasingly more difficult for American and British bands to tour the European continent. There seem to be more and more restrictions and the costs are getting higher. Obviously, it is important to always support your local artists, but for clubs and festivals, the lack of overseas bands means a diminish in diversity of their lineups. Left of the Dial deals with this problem as well; we want to be able to offer our punters an attractive mix of the best emerging artists from all over the world, but bringing a band over just for one Left of the Dial show (and thus taking on all travel and accommodation costs) is too expensive. There's no way we will be able to pay enough to make it cost-effective

PARIS & ROTTERDAM UNITED

A SUPERSONIC WAY TO SUPPORT BANDS

by LOTD

and still keep ticket prices reasonable. So, we were wondering if there's a way we can make it more attractive for bands to cross the ocean. Can we build a network of a few like-minded venues and festivals where bands could go right before, or just after Left of the Dial, so they at least have a basis to build a European tour on? In our search for venues willing to collaborate, we stumbled upon the Parisian club Supersonic and we immediately fell in love. As soon as you set foot inside the venue, you feel their infectious enthusiasm for live music. The way they contribute to a lively music scene is inspiring, plus they just founded their own festival. Reasons enough to feature them in this magazine.



Since 2016, Supersonic Club has been located in the heart of the Bastille area in Paris. It is a three-floor building with a 286 capacity: the ground floor is where the concerts take place, and it holds a stage, and a bar. On the second floor there's a mezzanine with a smoking room, a second bar, and some seats. On the third floor, you'll find large a pretty luxurious dressing room for the artists, including a bathroom with a shower. Just a few doors down the street, there's a second location run by the Supersonic crew. It used to be a record store, but now they are considering turning it into a second venue for gigs with a capacity of 140. We asked head of programme Aurelien Jobard to explain the concept of this Parisian sanctuary for alternative music. →



*'over 1,000 bands play at
Supersonic every year'*

Left: outside Supersonic
(Santiago Perez Gallardo)
Bottom: Tramhaus at
Supersonic (Sam Mauger)



How many concerts do you organise yearly?

'We're proud to say that more than 1,000 bands play at Supersonic every year. Every night of the week, a minimum of three bands play at Supersonic Club. Sometimes, it even adds up to five. We try to have at least one international band on every night. Aside from a performance fee, we also provide a full back-line for each and every band - even including guitars and bass when needed - to help them travel light. We provide catering for the bands, consisting of a cold buffet, because unfortunately we don't have enough room to have a kitchen and cook inside the venue.'

Concerts on a daily basis? That means you have to sell an awful lot of concert tickets every year...

'Actually, all concert nights are free! We only have an entrance fee for our club nights and for the festival we organise.'

Wow, that's impressive! How do you finance such an extensive daily setup?

'Supersonic is self-funded, we don't get any help from the government. We try to do everything by ourselves in an independent way. The free entrance system for gigs is financed by the profits from club nights. We also sometimes rent out the space for corporate events. So, it's the bar that finances almost everything at Supersonic. However, finding the balance is very complicated because we need to be at full capacity every night to make it profitable. We have eleven full time employees who work on booking bands, communication, production, tech-nics, and another fifteen people at the bar. The personnel costs are extremely high, but there's really no way to downsize, everybody is needed to make Supersonic work as well as possible.'

Can you tell us some more about the club nights?

'Every Friday and Saturday, we do club nights starting right after the three bands of the evening have finished their set. These nights last from 11PM until 6AM, and follow themes generally organised by decades, such as indie rock from the 00s, classic rock from the 70s, or new wave from the 80s. During these nights, we always have a cover band playing



Top: club night (Laure Ghilarducci) **Next down:** queueing for Block Party Festival (Sam Mauger)
Bottom: Teleforme (Laure Ghilarducci)



'a collaboration between alternative festivals could be of great help for bands'



a best of set at 1 AM, so you could say the live experience really has a big place at Supersonic. These nights really attract lots of people, there is always a big queue in the street on Fridays and Saturdays.'

You've also organised a festival, right?

'Yes, our latest project is our Block Party Festival in the Supersonic neighbourhood with lots of new bands, most of them having never played in Paris before. This festival takes place in four different venues: Supersonic Club, Supersonic Records and two other cafés nearby. In total, over the three days of the Block Party festival, 30 bands played. The festival was not free, contrary to the regular gigs at Supersonic, yet all three days sold out! The bands were really happy, and so were we. The amazing and festive ambiance was everything we had hoped for, and we are already looking to organise more events like this!'

What kind of audience do you usually attract?

'We are lucky to have a very young audience, especially for club nights when everybody is around 18 to 25 years old. It's more diverse when it comes to gigs, but what everybody has in common is that they are very open. We also have lots of regular customers with a curious mind who are willing to discover new bands. Quite a lot of tourists know where to find us, as well as students. And friends of the bands who play here also come back to visit us. The

Photo: White Fang (Sam Mauger)

best promotion for Supersonic is the way we welcome the bands. Most of them really enjoy their gig at Supersonic because it's really crowded, yet with a great and homely atmosphere. So, they spread the word, and when their friends are in Paris, they know the best way to enjoy a Parisian night is to come to Supersonic.'

What do you think about some sort of alliance with other venues or festivals? Would it make life easier for bands?

Right after covid happened, we founded a new company named Take Me Out in collaboration with Jean-Louis Schell [French promoter of The Libertines, Kasabian, Razorlight, Crows, and more] to promote bands outside of Supersonic. The main purpose is to make everything we do at Supersonic possible outside of our own venue as well. We are trying different types of collaborations, taking part in festivals and finding new partners... So, we are definitely looking for more partnerships in France, and of course in Europe.

And Left of the Dial could be one of them?

'The first time I went to Left of the Dial, the festival blew my mind and made me want to do the same thing in a Parisian way. Most of

the bands that we have at Supersonic are English, and Brexit makes it very complicated and expensive for them to tour Europe. I think a collaboration between alternative venues or festivals in Europe could be of great help for bands as they need to have full weeks of gigs booked in Europe to make it profitable.

I'm already looking for other promoters in different cities and countries. It would be great to create some sort of network of organisations that all offer the same high standard of hosting conditions when it comes to catering, backline and hotels. I think Supersonic has somehow turned into a quality brand, just like Left of the Dial, and it's important for entities like us to work together. In the end we are all aiming to introduce new bands to new audiences.'