# Mighty Hoopla’s ban on freelance photographers signals corporate clampdown on festival coverage



The recent decision by Mighty Hoopla, a prominent music festival held in Brockwell Park, to ban all independent and freelance photographers from its upcoming events has raised alarms within the UK’s freelance economy. This shift has not only implications for photographers but also poses broader questions about media control and the influence of corporate entities on the arts.

Simon Jones, a representative of the festival, confirmed that all photography will be conducted in-house this year, marking a departure from previous years where independent journalists were welcomed. This new policy effectively shuts out independent visual storytellers and changes the landscape of festival coverage. Once a platform for diverse perspectives, Mighty Hoopla risks becoming an echo chamber, relying solely on images curated by its in-house team. As Brixton Buzz noted, this move contradicts the festival's image of being fun and inclusive, with the outlet lamenting the loss of independent coverage.

Compounding this concern is the recent acquisition of Mighty Hoopla's parent company, Superstruct Entertainment, by the private equity firm KKR in a €1.3 billion deal. This takeover highlights a worrying trend whereby small, independent events, previously run by local promoters, are increasingly falling under the control of large corporations. In this case, KKR aims to capitalise on the live music industry’s projected growth of 6.5% annually by 2030, using data from music streaming platforms to standardise operations across multiple festivals.

Critics argue that such corporate consolidation stifles independent expression and could pave the way for other major festivals to implement similar restrictions, potentially sidelining the very freelancers who infuse vitality into the music scene. For instance, independent photographers like Luke Dyson, who have previously worked with Mighty Hoopla and depend on these gigs for their income, now face uncertainty. While there are still opportunities within the freelance community, this ban indicates a shift towards tighter corporate control over artistic narratives.

This trend coincides with existing controversies surrounding KKR, particularly the fallout from its affiliations with Israel. Some artists have withdrawn from performances at other festivals due to KKR’s ties, indicating that audiences are increasingly attentive to the ethics underlying corporate practices in the arts. Mighty Hoopla has publicly acknowledged the importance of transparency and has expressed its disappointment at being associated with practices counter to its values.

As the spotlight grows on these corporate entities, questions arise regarding who will cover these events in the future. The Independent has recently secured an exclusive partnership with Mighty Hoopla, marking a shift away from independent media. Roisin O’Connor, the Music Editor at The Independent, expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration, yet this brings to light a crucial concern: what does the future hold for the UK’s freelance community when major events begin to restrict access to independent journalists and photographers?

The implications of such decisions extend beyond immediate financial concerns for freelancers; they resonate with deeper issues of media diversity and artistic freedom. The Mighty Hoopla controversy serves as a bellwether for other potential shifts within the entertainment industry, indicating a growing trend where profit motivates the consolidation of creative operations, potentially leading to a less vibrant and diverse cultural landscape. While the festival insists its decisions are aimed at improving the quality of the event, the trade-off may disenfranchise many independent creatives whose work is essential to the richness of the arts.

As the music festival landscape evolves under corporate influence, the necessity for robust discussions and actions to defend the role of freelancers and independent voices becomes critical. The ability to access and capture the myriad stories from these cultural events is fundamental, and the ramifications of any ban could extend far beyond a single festival. As audiences and creatives navigate this changing terrain, it remains crucial to advocate for a marketplace where diversity in perspective, style, and voice thrives.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.freelanceinformer.com/news/freelancers-banned-from-mighty-hoopla-music-festival/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/buyout-barons-music-fest-punt-is-oddly-compelling-2024-09-06/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.freelanceinformer.com/news/freelancers-banned-from-mighty-hoopla-music-festival/), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3263dcfa-2072-4202-bbb0-0f2c410e3c47)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/cvc-joins-kkr-in-acquiring-live-events-firm-superstruct/), [[6]](https://www.iq-mag.net/2024/06/global-investment-firm-buys-superstruct-for-e1-3bn/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/superstruct-revenues-jumped-26-to-222m-in-2023-the-year-before-it-was-acquired-by-kkr-in-a-1-4bn-deal/), [[1]](https://www.freelanceinformer.com/news/freelancers-banned-from-mighty-hoopla-music-festival/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.freelanceinformer.com/news/freelancers-banned-from-mighty-hoopla-music-festival/), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3263dcfa-2072-4202-bbb0-0f2c410e3c47)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.freelanceinformer.com/news/freelancers-banned-from-mighty-hoopla-music-festival/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/buyout-barons-music-fest-punt-is-oddly-compelling-2024-09-06/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.freelanceinformer.com/news/freelancers-banned-from-mighty-hoopla-music-festival/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/buyout-barons-music-fest-punt-is-oddly-compelling-2024-09-06/> - In September 2024, Reuters reported that Superstruct Entertainment, which owns over 80 live experience events including major music festivals across Europe, was acquired by U.S. private equity firm KKR for €1.3 billion. This acquisition reflects a growing trend of buyout firms investing in in-person events post-pandemic. The live music industry is predicted to grow at 6.5% annually by 2030, making it an attractive investment despite high initial valuations and operational challenges. KKR's investment strategy involves leveraging data from music streamers to tailor events and standardize operations across festivals, anticipating significant growth and returns on their investment.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/3263dcfa-2072-4202-bbb0-0f2c410e3c47> - In June 2024, the Financial Times reported that private equity group KKR agreed to acquire Superstruct Entertainment, a UK-based company that organizes European music festivals, for €1.3 billion. Superstruct hosts over 80 festivals across 10 countries, including Hungary's Sziget and Germany's Wacken Open Air. The deal reflects the recovery and growth potential in the live events industry post-pandemic. Providence Equity Partners, which established Superstruct in 2017, is selling the company but retains an option to invest €250 million further. KKR sees significant growth opportunities with Superstruct, aiming to expand its festival portfolio.
4. <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/superstruct-revenues-jumped-26-to-222m-in-2023-the-year-before-it-was-acquired-by-kkr-in-a-1-4bn-deal/> - In March 2025, Music Business Worldwide reported that Superstruct Entertainment, a live music events organizer and promoter, reported a 25.9% year-on-year increase in revenue for 2023, the year before it was acquired by investment giant KKR in a $1.4 billion deal. The London-headquartered company filed an earnings report for fiscal 2023, showing revenue of £178.6 million, up from £141.9 million in 2022. However, the company swung to an operating loss of £33.26 million, compared to an operating profit of £6.67 million the year before. Superstruct attributed the rising revenue to its acquisitions of live music companies in various markets, along with the post-pandemic recovery of the live music market.
5. <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/cvc-joins-kkr-in-acquiring-live-events-firm-superstruct/> - In October 2024, Music Business Worldwide reported that investment giant CVC joined KKR in acquiring Superstruct Entertainment, following KKR's acquisition of Superstruct in June in a deal reportedly worth €1.3 billion. The transaction between KKR and Superstruct has now closed, said CVC. Superstruct Entertainment, established in 2017 with initial funding from Providence Equity Partners, operates 80 music festivals and 200 smaller events across 10 countries in Europe and Australia. The company's events attract 7 million attendees annually, the Financial Times reported earlier. James Barton, a former Live Nation president, leads Superstruct. The company's festival portfolio includes Wacken Open Air, Defqon.1, Parookaville, Tinderbox, Zwarte Cross, and Sónar.
6. <https://www.iq-mag.net/2024/06/global-investment-firm-buys-superstruct-for-e1-3bn/> - In June 2024, IQ Magazine reported that American global investment firm KKR acquired festival giant Superstruct Entertainment from Providence in a €1.3 billion deal. Superstruct was founded in 2017 by Creamfields founder and former Live Nation president of electronic music James Barton and Roderik Schlosser while at Providence. The company owns and operates more than 80 music festivals across 10 countries in Europe and Australia, and generates annual revenue of more than €100 million. Its network includes Elrow (ES), Sziget (HU), Wacken Open Air (DE), Mysteryland (NL), Hideout (HR), Sonar (ES), Flow (FI), Øya (NO), Parookaville (DE) and Tinderbox (DK), while its UK interests include Y Not, Truck, Nass, Bluedot, Victorious, South West Four, Kendal Calling, Tramlines, Boardmasters and Lost Ventures – many of which were acquired when Global’s portfolio was divvied up in April 2019.