# Gary Kemp reveals how soaring touring costs and social media pressures fuel mental health struggles for musicians



Gary Kemp, the renowned guitarist and songwriter from Spandau Ballet, has brought to light the profound financial and emotional challenges currently confronting musicians. In a recent episode of the I Never Thought It Would Happen podcast, hosted by Chris Difford of Squeeze, Kemp elaborates on how the realities of touring in 2025 have prompted significant changes in his approach to music. He candidly shares, “Touring is a big expense—I don’t even know what venues I can afford anymore. It could just end up costing £100,000 for something that gives me pleasure.”

This sentiment echoes the wider struggles faced by many artists in today’s music industry, where the costs of touring have escalated dramatically. Rising expenses related to logistics—such as flights and accommodation—are compounded by the pressures of low ticket sales, a situation highlighted in various reports noting an alarming trend among musicians cancelling tours to prioritise mental health. These financial strains, coupled with the overwhelming nature of incessant touring schedules, have left many feeling compelled to reconsider their careers.

Kemp’s reflections come amidst a backdrop of shifting priorities in music. With the release of his new solo album, The Destination, he indicates a move away from the commercial demands of the charts, saying, “It’ll be around for a long time,” instead emphasising meaningful artistic expression. This shift is particularly pertinent since industry expectations have evolved, placing a significant premium on artists’ presence in the social media arena. As Kemp observes, “Labels rely on your social media. If you’ve ignored it, they don’t know how to sell you.” This reality often forces artists into a cycle of self-promotion that can contribute to mental health challenges, something that has been widely discussed in recent years.

The psychological toll of touring is further exacerbated by social media, with many emerging artists feeling the pressure to maintain an engaging online persona while navigating their personal lives. Kemp poignantly questions, “What people want now is the warts and all. But how far are you willing to go?” This dilemma has prompted a broader conversation about mental health in the industry, with numerous artists sharing their experiences of stress and exhaustion caused by relentless touring demands.

Kemp also opened up about his personal battles with mental health, revealing that he wrote his album while in “the worst mind space,” following the loss of both parents and the aftermath of lockdown. “Writing was the only therapy,” he states, illustrating how creativity can serve as both a refuge and a means of processing grief. This perspective resonates with many musicians who have used their art to navigate difficult emotional landscapes, particularly in the wake of the pandemic.

Additionally, Kemp's passion for theatre, with recent performances in Harold Pinter plays, further enriches his artistic narrative. He perceives a valuable connection between acting and music, particularly regarding their shared demands for discipline and precision.

This ongoing dialogue surrounding the pressures of touring and mental health has gained prominence in recent years, with several artists stepping forward to share their own truths. As highlighted by discussions in various media sources, many musicians are advocating for greater understanding and systemic changes in the industry to foster a healthier environment for artists. There is a growing recognition that while the pressures of performance and promotion can be intense, prioritising mental health and wellbeing is essential for sustainability in the music industry.

In conclusion, Gary Kemp’s insights provide a critical lens into the evolving landscape of the music industry, underscoring a pressing need for compassion and support for artists navigating these turbulent waters.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: Sources 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.music-news.com/news/UK/181558/Gary-Kemp-sounds-alarm-on-touring-costs-social-media-pressures-mental-health> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/sep/22/this-should-not-be-normalised-why-musicians-are-cancelling-tours-to-protect-their-mental-health> - This article discusses the increasing number of musicians canceling tours to prioritize their mental health. It highlights the pressures of relentless touring schedules, financial strains, and the impact of social media on artists' well-being. The piece features insights from various artists, including Yard Act and Cassandra Jenkins, who share their personal experiences and the challenges they face in the music industry. The article emphasizes the need for greater understanding and support for musicians facing mental health challenges.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/oct/18/risks-rising-costs-and-relentless-demands-why-so-many-musicians-are-cancelling-their-tours> - This article examines the financial and emotional challenges musicians face, leading many to cancel tours. It discusses the rising costs of touring, including expensive flights and low ticket sales, and the relentless demands of the industry. The piece features insights from artists like Santigold and Animal Collective, who share their experiences of canceling tours due to these pressures. The article also highlights the broader impact on the live music industry and the need for systemic changes to support artists.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/oct/28/youre-doing-it-purely-for-the-exposure-why-many-musicians-can-no-longer-afford-to-tour> - This article explores the financial difficulties musicians face, leading many to cancel tours or perform without profit. It discusses the pressures of constant self-promotion, rising costs, and the impact of the pandemic on the live music industry. The piece features insights from artists like Santigold and Animal Collective, who share their experiences of canceling tours due to these challenges. The article emphasizes the need for systemic changes to support artists and ensure the sustainability of the live music industry.
5. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/pressure-cooker-impact-of-touring-on-mental-health-needs-addressing-but-help-is-at-hand-2-3512555> - This article discusses the mental health challenges musicians face due to the pressures of touring. It features insights from artists like Tasha and Taja, who share their experiences of stress, exhaustion, and the impact of social media on their well-being. The piece emphasizes the need for greater understanding and support for musicians facing mental health challenges and highlights the importance of self-care and setting boundaries in the music industry.
6. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shainshapiro/2023/11/01/how-our-mental-health-is-impacting-live-music-for-better-and-worse/> - This article examines the impact of mental health on the live music industry. It discusses how the pandemic has affected artists' mental health and the subsequent impact on live performances. The piece highlights the challenges artists face, including financial pressures, mental health struggles, and the need for systemic changes to support artists. It also discusses the broader impact on the live music industry and the importance of valuing art and supporting artists' well-being.
7. <https://www.music-news.com/news/UK/181558/Gary-Kemp-sounds-alarm-on-touring-costs-social-media-pressures-mental-health> - In this article, Gary Kemp, the guitarist and songwriter from Spandau Ballet, discusses the financial and emotional challenges musicians face in 2025. He reflects on the rising costs of touring, the pressures of social media, and his personal battles with mental health. Kemp also shares insights into his new solo album, 'The Destination,' and his passion for theatre. The piece highlights the broader issues facing musicians today and the need for support and understanding in the industry.