



Revealing it all

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Ruud Berends on the European Talent Exchange



This strong alliance involves the most influential parties in European music

special feature



Many live music veterans in Europe were more than just sceptical when the idea of an organisation to promote cross-border shows by largely unknown acts first emerged. But the European Talent Exchange Program has astonished its detractors and made an invaluable contribution to the industry. Gordon Mason reports

The success of the European Talent Exchange Program (ETEP) is helping acts throughout the continent to cross borders, find new audiences and sell CDs in territories they might not otherwise have accessed.

It performs a unique role, helping participating artists to broaden and build their careers in a meaningful way that benefits the whole live industry, not to forget the record companies.

ETEP was the brainchild of Noorderslag/Eurosonic founder Peter Smidt of BUMA Cultuur (formerly Conamus) and Ruud Berends, who runs international marketing for Noorderslag and Eurosonic as well as

heading up MusicXport, the Dutch music export office started by BUMA Cultuur and Dutch pop and rock institute NPI.

"Basically we wanted to do something to improve the presentation of European repertoire around Europe," explains Smidt. "We had a few ideas, but we figured that festivals are really good at bringing in and putting on new talent and the great thing is that the audience is already there."

Berends notes, "Historically, Anglo-American repertoire has been the focus of professional distribution and promotion in Europe. Some of the

audience issue 77

special feature



ETEP

exchanging talent across Europe and beyond

ETEP's goals is to stimulate contacts on the cultural, business and media level between European professionals in the European music field."

However, rather than just talk to festival organisers, Berends and Smidt decided to dig a little deeper to involve radio stations and, indirectly, record labels.

"Our European Broadcasting Union (EBU) members have a strong input in the programming of the Eurosonic festival since they promote their best national talent at the event. EBU members also record and broadcast many of the festival shows," says Berends.

Outlining the thinking behind that involvement,

Smidt says, "We're trying to work a way around a chicken and egg situation. As things stood, record companies were not releasing a band's records in other countries because the band was not playing any shows there. At the same time, radio wouldn't play their records because the band were not doing anything and the record just wouldn't be available."

"What ETEP does is use our radio partners as an A&P source, as it is the radio stations in the individual European countries that choose the acts to perform at Eurosonic," says Smidt.

"Then, when it comes to selecting acts to play at festivals, the festivals will work with their local radio



Ruud Berends

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issue 77: audience

19

special feature



stations so that the band gets a bit of airplay before the festival to promote them. In turn, that leads to the record company maybe releasing the record into new territories, because the act is getting radio support and live exposure at the festival."

DISTRIBUTING REWARDS

And it was obvious from early on that the ETEP concept was a winning formula.

"Pretty soon after the first edition started, we were pleasantly surprised by the number of participating festivals and the number of acts booked. It's just gone from strength to strength ever since," states Berends.

Citing one act that has benefited from the programme, Smidt says, "Kaizers Orchestra had nine ETEP shows in its first round and, on the back of that, they signed distribution deals in all those territories. Then on the next album, Universal Germany picked them up for Europe, so the bands and the record companies can really reap rewards from ETEP."

That success makes Kaizers Orchestra manager Eivind Brydoy one of ETEP's most outspoken supporters.

"We first became involved with ETEP three years ago and it was a great way to get the band into the festival market in Europe," says Brydoy.

"Of course you have to do a lot of groundwork yourself to get the people from the festivals to come to see your band once you're in Groningen, but the way ETEP is set up, this is easier than normal. Because Kaizers Orchestra is in Norway, it would otherwise be difficult to persuade festival bookers to come and see them, but the ETEP showcases allow bookers to take a chance and look at lots of bands."

And the popularity of the band among those festival bookers quickly spread to the festival audiences as well.

"Now we have a record deal with Universal Germany and the band is very busy playing festivals all over Europe - especially in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland, as well as the Scandinavian countries. The way they have now broken the festivals market may not have been possible without ETEP," adds Brydoy.

THE FERDINAND EFFECT

Another band that benefited from exposure in Groningen was Franz Ferdinand.

"It was our agent Mike Greek's idea to play there. We did it for a reason and it really worked out well for us," says manager Cerne Canning of UK-based Supervision Management.

With eight European festivals booking Franz Ferdinand on the back of that showcase, Greek, who works at Helter Skelter in London, knows ETEP can offer emerging acts great opportunities.

"I've used ETEP a few times," says Greek. "It's especially good for alternative acts signed to smaller record labels. Franz Ferdinand got really positive feedback after their show and we did get a lot of inquiries from festivals, so it's very good for developing bands."

QUALITY STANDARD

Festival organisers are equally delighted by ETEP's success.

Folkert Koopmans of German promoter FKP Scorpio, can't remember how he first heard about ETEP, but with four of his festivals reaping the benefits, he is a definite fan.

"It allows me to check a lot of new talent on a high level of quality," he says. "In my opinion ETEP is one of the best, if not the best organised event. It's set in a fantastic town and it's a pleasure to be there."

FKP Scorpio promotes such festivals as the 16-18 June Greenfield Festival (cap. 30,000), 23-25 June Hurricane and Southside festivals (50,000/40,000) and 12-13 August M'era Luna Festival (25,000).

Among the acts ETEP helped book slots at FKP festivals this year are The Answer (at Greenfield), The Kooks, Duels, Within Temptation, Shout Out Louds, The Sounds and The Answer (Hurricane and Southside) and Epica and Within Temptation (M'era Luna).

Holger Jan Schmidt of the Rheinkultur Festival is another fan.

"Rheinkultur has been part of ETEP from the beginning," said Smidt tells audience. "Rheinkultur is an admission free festival, so you can imagine our budgets are very limited. We get support from ETEP and are able to put on very interesting and upcoming bands. That's one of the main things our audience wants to see - new talent on its way up."

This year's Rheinkultur on 1 July attracted 110,000 people, who saw ETEP bands such as Kaizers Orchestra, Teitur, Peter Pan Speedrock, Moneybaker, Tiger Lou, Sugarplum Fairy and Rhesus.

"Usually we have a little more people, but this year we had to compete with the World Cup insanity," says Schmidt.

"ETEP is a very smart way to spread the word about a good European act all over the continent. I was convinced the first minute I saw Kaizers Orchestra in that theatre in Groningen. I like the programme because it fits so well with our festival's philosophy."

SELLING THE CONCEPT

With Eurosonic boasting about 150 acts each year and Noorderslag a further 45, festival bookers who visit Groningen in January have access to nearly 200 bands. But the work of ETEP doesn't stop there. As part of spreading the word about ETEP, Berends and Smidt

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Kaizer's Orchestra manager Eivind Brydoy



try to visit a number of European festivals each year, where they are helped to meet journalists by their hosts.

"We visit roughly five festivals a year, where we do a presentation and press conference to talk about Eurosonic, Noorderslag and ETEP," reveals Berends. "So far this year we've visited Arezzo Wave in Italy and Gurtenfestival in Switzerland. What happens is the festival contacts everyone on their press database to announce our presentation and that helps us communicate the work that we do."

Philippe Cornu of Gurtenfestival says, "The organisers of ETEP are part of our festival this year and will present the idea of ETEP to various journalists and media people, during a special press-conference."

"As Christof Huber (of Opener at St.Gallen, Switzerland) and myself are both promoters and talent bookers of our events, and are part of the board of (festivals association) Yourope, we have a strong interest in supporting ETEP, which has become, in a short time, very important and also very successful."

Cornu acts as Editor, The Sounds, Wir Sind Helden and Gurtes Brot among the ETEP acts at the 13-16 July Gurtenfestival.

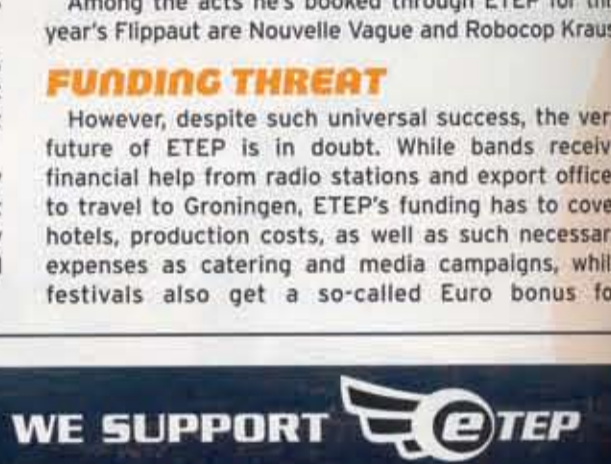
"ETEP allows you to see a lot of European talent, but it has also become a big gathering of talent bookers from all over Europe, which also allows a lot of know-how exchange," he says.

Claudio Trotta of Barley Arts Promotion in Italy organises the 21-22 July, 10,000-capacity Filippaut Festival and, although he has never personally attended the Noorderslag/Eurosonic events, he is all too aware of their importance.



"ETEP is very useful when it comes to saving money, gathering information and making contacts," says Trotta. "Everything that helps us share information and helps prevent the globalisation of music has to be applauded, so ETEP is definitely welcome."

Among the acts he's booked through ETEP this year's Filippaut are Nouvelle Vague and Robocop Kraus.



Gurten Festival

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FUNDING THREAT

However, despite such universal success, the very future of ETEP is in doubt. While bands receive financial help from radio stations and export offices to travel to Groningen, ETEP's funding has to cover hotels, production costs, as well as such necessary expenses as catering and media campaigns, while festivals also get a so-called Euro bonus for

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issue 77: audience

audience issue 77

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participating in the programme. An ETEP dinner, promotional CDs and recording facilities also have to be covered in the scheme's budget.

Berends explains, "We were for a large part funded by the EU, but that's until the end of 2006. At this moment we don't know when we can apply for further funding since the new 'Culture 2007 Programme' is not yet published."

All EU-funded cultural programmes are in the same position. We have to wait for a new call for proposals.

"However, we are very confident that the EU will get the funding, because ETEP fulfills all of the EU's goals and we don't see any reason why they wouldn't continue to fund us."

Smidt goes one step further. "There will definitely be another ETEP scheme next year. Our current partners, Sena Performers, BUMA Cultuur, European Music Office, the festivals, the radio broadcasters and of course the Noorderslag Foundation will provide the necessary budgets to continue, but it may be a bit more basic than previous years. The European Commission's Cultural programme for 2007 should have been in place by now, but because of administrative problems it is not, so we are not sure when we will be able to apply for funding, nor when we would receive any money."

"We think we may have to wait until November or December to find out, which makes things difficult for us because Noorderslag and Eurosonic are in January. So we may well have to proceed without funding, but we know that the European Commission is very keen on ETEP so we're hoping everything will be resolved."

As one of the scheme's biggest supporters Rikke Øxner of Denmark's 75,000-capacity Roskilde festival would



Rikke Øxner (far left) with the Danish delegation at 2007's Eurosonic

definitely miss ETEP if the programme shut down. ETEP bands appearing at the event included The Goo Team, Mugson, Beatsteaks, Macaco and Jackman in 2005, and Sisco Ensemble, Infadels, Editors, Shout Out Louds, Wir Sind Helden and DJ Grazzhoppas in 2006.

"Roskilde has attended Eurosonic/Noorderslag for about 10 years and as a member of Yourope and part of its board, we have been part of the development and planning of ETEP," says Øxner.

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issue 77: audience

23

ETEP FESTIVALS AND SELECTED ACTS

Festival / event	country	artists
Benicassim	Spain	Editors, The Kooks
Bylarram	Norway	Disco Ensemble, DJiff Sanders, Spleen United, Rhesus
Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival	USA	Editors, Dungen, Infadels
Dour Festival	Belgium	Bauchklang, Infadels, Wir Sind Helden, Within Temptation, Mohair
Filippaut	Italy	The Robocop Kraus, Nouvelle Vague, Silent Disco
Frequency	Austria	Mohair, Infadels, The Robocop Kraus, Fettes Brot, Wir Sind Helden, Sugarplum Fairy
Greenfield	Switzerland	The Answer
Gurtenfestival	Switzerland	Fettes Brot, Wir Sind Helden, The Sounds, Editors, Culcha Candela
Haldern Open Air	Germany	Gem, The Kooks
Hultsfred	Sweden	Animal Alpha, Disco Ensemble, Within Temptation, Editors, Syd Matters
Hurricane	Germany	The Kooks, Duels, Within Temptation, Shout Out Louds, The Sounds, The Answer
Les Eurockennnes	France	The Sunday Drivers, Infadels
Les Nuits Botanique	Belgium	Adem, Hush Puppies, Rhesus, Jose Gonzales, Stuart A. Staples, The Sunday Drivers
Lowlands festival	Netherlands	Corvus Corax & Cantus Burana, Wir Sind Helden, The Kooks, Ojos de Brujo, Jose Gonzales, Culcha Candela, Mew, Infadels
Malmö Festival	Sweden	Disco Ensemble
Marktrock Leuven	Belgium	Kraak & Smaak, Gem
Melt! festival	Germany	The Kooks, Hushpuppies, Infadels, Editors
M'era Luna	Germany	Epica, Within Temptation
Nova Rock	Austria	The Sounds, Disco Ensemble, The Answer, Madsen
Open Air St Gallen	Switzerland	Disco Ensemble, Fettes Brot, Editors, The Kooks
Oyafestival	Norway	Mystery Jets
Paleo festival	Netherlands	Rhesus, Hushpuppies, Editors, The Kooks, Infadels, Shout Out Louds
Parkpop festival	Netherlands	Babyfon Circus, The Kooks, Infadels
Primavera Sound	Netherlands	Infadels, Editors, The Kooks
Provinciasrock	Finland	Within Temptation
Pukkelpop	Belgium	Infadels, Nouvelle Vague, Jose Gonzales, Duels, Animal Alpha, Ojos De Brujo, Pete Philly & Perquisite, Mew, Yonderboi
Quart Festival	Norway	Rhesus, Sugarplum Fairy
Rheinkultur	Germany	Rhesus, Sugarplum Fairy
Rock Am Ring	Germany	Editors, Disco Ensemble, Animal Alpha
Rock In Idro	Italy	Disco Ensemble
Rock Werchter	Belgium	Editors, The Kooks
Rocko del Schiacko	Germany	Gem, Disco Ensemble, Sugarplum Fairy
Rockwave	Greece	The Sunday Drivers, Editors, Silent Disco
Roskilde	Denmark	Disco Ensemble, Infadels, Editors, Shout Out Louds, Wir Sind Helden, DJ Grazzhoppas
Southside	Germany	The Kooks, Duels, Within Temptation, Shout Out Louds, The Sounds, The Answer
Sulkerrock	Belgium	Disco Ensemble, Campsite, Within Temptation
Summer Sundae	UK	Jose Gonzales, Nouvelle Vague, Gem
Sziget festival	Hungary	Wir Sind Helden, 17 Hippies, Kraak & Smaak, Silent Disco
T in the Park	Scotland, UK	Jose Gonzales, Silent Disco
The Great Escape	UK	Vicist, Gem, Disco Ensemble, Hush Puppies, Spleen United, Rhesus, Racon



Paleo Festival

"ETEP is a very good concept especially for smaller festivals that, apart from the usual Anglo-American acts, don't have many smaller international acts. At Roskilde, we have presented young talent from all over the world for years, but by joining ETEP we can hopefully export our many years of good experience to other festivals," she adds.

UNIQUE INFLUENCE

In Belgium, Wendy Vanleuwe, promoter and production manager of Sulkerrock recalls, "It was in 2003 we first heard about this unique possibility to promote young talented artists by subscribing for the Eurosonic festival. Sulkerrock joined ETEP the next year."

"It makes a difference at the financial stage of our planning, because Sulkerrock can invite bands that are on tour in Europe, thanks to the ETEP programme."

Vanleuwe counts The Beautiful Mess, Green Lizard, League Of Xo Gentlemen, Couchgrass, Gomm, Campsite, Disco Ensemble and Within Temptation as the bands booked through ETEP in the last three years.

"I was introduced to ETEP by the Swiss Music Export office and I first attended in 2005," says Sebastian Vuignier of Opus One, which promotes the Paleo Festival Nyon in Switzerland.

"The main advantage is to be able to scout around so many European newcomer bands within two festival nights. This year we booked six bands that we discovered in Groningen, including Editors, The Kooks, Infadels and Shout Out Louds."

"We visit all the major showcase festivals every year, but we book the most bands from ETEP. Being in January really helps to book summer festivals," adds Vuignier.

Highlighting the collective power of the festival and radio station members, Berends concludes, "This strong alliance involves the most influential parties in European music and provides a network of associates who are able to reach an audience of millions, thereby guaranteeing the continuing expansion of European music."

Wendy Vanleuwe

Sebastian Vuignier

issue 77: audience

audience issue 77