

A glimpse into music festivals in SA with Shaun Duvet



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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For decades, music festivals have become a global phenomena, varying in terms of genres, scale, cultural significance and attracting attendees from around the world. These include Coachella, Tomorrowland, and Glastonbury and feature a mix of music genres. Over the years, music festivals have started incorporating large-scale art installations, creating immersive environments that go beyond just music.

While the global music industry is worth billions, music festivals contribute significantly to local economies, generating revenue for the cities that host them through ticket sales, accommodation, food, and merchandise sales.

Locally, the music festival industry has a significant economic impact on South Africa, contributing to tourism, local businesses, and employment, providing opportunities for many local businesses and artists.



Shaun Duwe is the founder and CEO of The Unit, a South African entertainment-based holding company. Image supplied

Shaun Duwe (or Shaun Duvet, as he's more commonly known to legions of EDM fans), has been in the industry for over 25 years. Having started out as a DJ, his journey has progressed from owning clubs, to concert production and promotion, to his current role as the founder and CEO of The Unit, a South African entertainment-based holding company comprising Anything Goes, Ultra South Africa, Cascade Holdings, XS Holdings, Jet Black and Corona Sunsets Festival South Africa

Corona Sunsets Festival World Tour, which launched in Cape Town in 2023, returns to South Africa following its success, sees fans join together to celebrate the sunset in an immersive experience.

As the festival organiser, Duwe shares more about the the booming business of music festivals...

■ ***Can you provide an overview of the music festival industry in South Africa and its current trends and challenges?***

South Africa has a rich and diverse culture of beautiful people, and our music and festival scene is the perfect platform to showcase and celebrate. Post-covid, there have been many festivals and events that have come out. However, not all will last.

The business and economics of the festival business are challenging and promoters need to understand the balancing act of managing costs, tickets, artists, and most importantly, lots of planning.

■ ***How have music festivals evolved in recent years, especially in terms of music genres and experiences offered?***

Music changes all the time, and as a promoter, it is important to know what is next and stay close to the music industry, artists, managers, and bookers.

Keeping your ear close to the ground gives you the chance to work towards what the next trend or big artist will be, and once it does happen and you book the right act at the right time, it's like a big melting pot of magic seeing it all come together for the fans.

■ ***How do music festivals generate revenue, and what are the primary sources of income for festival organisers?***

Ticket sales, sponsorship, merchandise, and concessions (bars & food).

■ ***Could you discuss the economic benefits that festivals can bring to host cities and communities?***

Yes, of course, the knock-on effects of festivals have a hugely positive financial impact. Firstly, the festival itself generates jobs and revenue. On some shows, we hire up to 1,000 staff. Then, of course, it is all of the surrounding businesses, hotels, taxis, clothing shops (getting your festival fit), restaurants, and more that all benefit.

On top of that, with great content, comes great marketing, and well-marketed festivals and shows gain global eye balls, all contributing to a positive travel industry, and promoting people to come to our beautiful country.



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■ ***Could you share some insights into the planning and logistics involved in organising a music festival, from selecting the lineup to securing a venue?***

Generally speaking, for some shows, it could take up to a full year of planning. Commitment, focus, dedication, and understanding your market and its needs are key.

Regarding talent booking, it is important to know the music, the artists, and in my view, be a fan and music lover. There is no better feeling in the world than watching your favorite artist on stage.

Of course, venue is key and doing your research on the right space is crucial.



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■ ***What role does branding and marketing play in the success of a music festival?***

Festivals are about culture and bringing people together. In terms of successful branding and marketing, the brands need to understand the core values of the festival and be a part of the overall narrative and values of what the festival encapsulates.



The Corona Sunsets Festival is a perfect example of this. Paying homage to the setting sun, in a relaxed and beautiful way, listening to amazing music, and taking part in a beautiful moment with new (and newly found) loved ones sipping on a Corona with a wedge of lime.

The story writes self and it is this level of commitment to the festival and brand that will stand the test of time and essentially build the brand and culture of the festival.

■ ***What influence do sponsors have on music festivals?***

Sponsors are hugely important to making festivals work in this country. Unfortunately, with our currency, international talent is incredibly expensive, and the SA consumer only has so much in their back pockets to pay for tickets, with the cost of rising fuel, food, and living expenses. So it is a real balancing act to get the ticket prices right and for this to happen, sponsors are key to making the festival.

■ ***Safety and environmental concerns have become increasingly important in the festival industry. How are organisers addressing these issues, and what steps are being taken to make festivals more safe and eco-friendly?***

Safety planning is paramount for a successful festival, and we work closely with all law enforcement to ensure a smooth, safe, and happy festival for all attendees.

In terms of being eco-friendly, the Corona Sunsets Festival is 100% plastic-free and we are very proud to have the official blue oceanic award.



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■ ***Technology is certainly playing a role in enhancing the festival experience. Are there any innovations or trends you find particularly exciting?***

Yes, of course, communication is everything, and as festivals evolve with some of them taking place over multiple days and with more activities, people want to communicate and stay in touch with one another easily and know exactly what is going on, where, and at what point.

■ What do you see as the future of music festivals in South Africa?

I believe the festivals that have clear and focused goals will continue to grow and build. The festivals that are about building communities with strong messages, music, unity, culture, and inclusiveness will succeed and grow.

I believe that festivals with an eye on the well-being of the environment and future will grow and succeed, and I believe that festivals that know their market and how to give it to their fans will always grow and build. The festivals and concepts that are looking for a quick buck, will be short-lived.

The Corona Sunsets Festival World Tour Cape Town will take place on 6 April 2024 at The Glen Country Club, Clifton, Cape Town. Tickets are available at www.Corona.Howler.co.za

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