Saudi Music Cities Exchange

SAUDI MUSIC CITIES EXCHANGE
SMCE

Programme Report 2025

هيئة الموسيقى
Music Commission

MUSIC
CITIES
EVENTS

RIYADH MUSIC WEEK

SOUND DIPLOMACY | EVENTS & EDUCATION

Introduction & Purpose

The Saudi Music Cities Exchange (SMCE) was an eight-week programme designed to equip professionals across Saudi Arabia with the tools and knowledge to grow their cities through music. Brought to life by Sound Diplomacy Events & Education in collaboration with the Saudi Music Commission | Ministry of Culture, the initiative followed the Music Cities Convention held in Riyadh in December 2024.

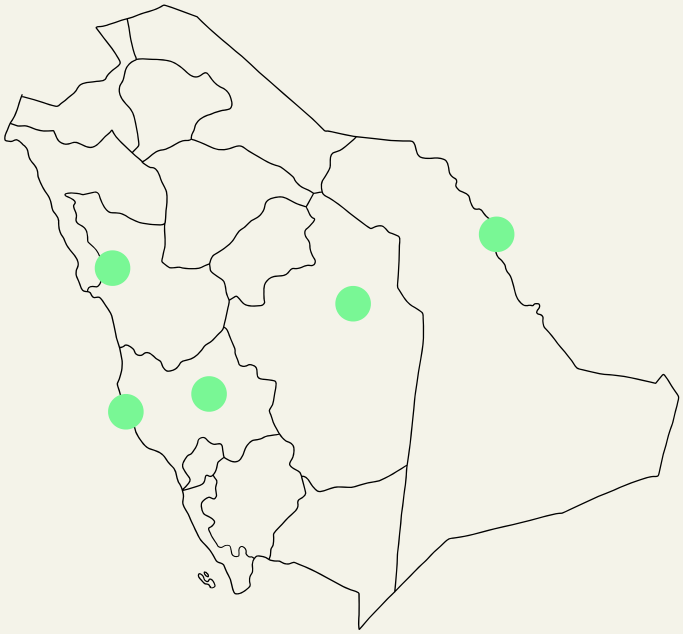
Targeting a cross-section of Saudi Arabia's music ecosystem – including artists, entrepreneurs, policymakers, educators, and cultural leaders – the SMCE ***aimed to bridge practice and policy***, giving participants the skills to transform music from an art form into a driver of social and economic value.

Programme Objectives

The Exchange was designed as a custom capacity-building initiative, defined by three pillars:

- ***Rooted in music***: exploring connections between music, policy, economy, and tourism.
- ***Balanced learning***: pairing global expertise with fast-paced team collaboration.
- ***City-focused***: producing strategies tailored to the needs of Saudi cities.





Structure

5 city-based teams, 6 weeks of courses, 2 weeks of Music City Snapshot!

The programme brought together ***27 participants*** from across the Kingdom, representing the fields of music policy, business, and education. Organisations included MDLBEAST, Heavy Arabia Entertainment, the Saudi Music Commission, and Madhaus, among others.

For the first ***six weeks***, participants engaged in a learning journey that featured:

- 12 sessions delivered by 16 global industry professionals
- Expert-led masterclasses, international case studies, and workshops
- Local Impact Sessions, where global lessons were applied to the Saudi context

The final ***two weeks*** of the SMCE were dedicated to ***outputs and application***. Throughout the programme, participants worked in city-based teams, each analysing the music ecosystem of one of five Saudi cities. In the concluding phase, with the help of office hours & instructions, teams refined their Music City Snapshots - strategic documents that examined their city's identity, key stakeholders, and opportunities for growth, producing:

- ***5 Music City Snapshots***: Riyadh, Jeddah, Taif, Dammam, and AlUla
- ***65 pages*** of research & recommendations, including:
  - Music city identity and branding strategies
  - Stakeholder mapping and SWOT analyses
  - Proposals for music tourism and cultural initiatives

Sessions were held online on zoom, using a designated community in the **Music Cities Community**, where the participants could also find related resources such as research studies, interviews, and other guidelines

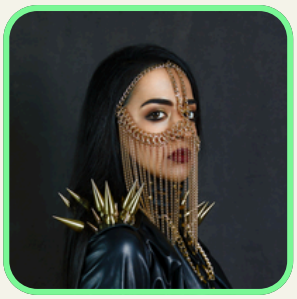
Week 1



Azucena Micó
Global Head of Research and Strategy, Sound Diplomacy



Vishruti Bindal
Head of Projects, Sound Diplomacy Events & Education



Gigi Arabia
CEO/Founder, Heavy Arabia Entertainment

Weekly focus: Music Ecosystem & Your Place in It
Session 1 - Masterclass: Introduction to General Music Ecosystem
Session 2 - Fireside chat: Music Ecosystem in KSA

Summary of This Week's Sessions

- Azucena Micó's masterclass broke down what a music ecosystem really is: the network of artists, venues, audiences, policymakers, and industry players that shape a city. She showed how education and artist support can drive cultural, social, and economic impact, and how strategies can scale to any community.

The key takeaway: collaboration and sustainability are essential for music to thrive.

- In this fireside chat, moderated by Vishruti Bindal, we highlighted a prominent voice in the Saudi music ecosystem. Gigi Arabia shared how her passion for rock and metal pushed her to build support for genres often left on the margins. She spoke about the hurdles, from a lack of mid-sized venues and rehearsal spaces to limited technical expertise, and how the community keeps going with passion and DIY solutions.

The takeaway: even under pressure, Saudi's music scene is finding ways to grow.

- In this week's Local Impact Lab: Groups worked together to create a one-page summary of their city's music ecosystem, highlighting its background, identity, and key stakeholders.

Week 2



Azucena Micó
Global Head of Research and Strategy, Sound Diplomacy

Weekly focus: Building Music Strategies
Session 1 - Masterclass: Understanding Music's Value & Developing Strategies
Session 2 - Workshop: Developing an Action Plan to Integrate Music into City Strategy

Summary of This Week's Sessions

- In this masterclass, Azucena Micó returned to explore how music powers city growth, from economic impact to social inclusion and cultural vibrancy. Case studies like Huntsville, Alabama, showed how music supports talent retention and urban development, while a new framework helped participants assess social, cultural, economic, and environmental outcomes.

The key takeaway: data and evidence are essential to building strong, sustainable music strategies.

- This workshop built on the previous session by turning learnings into action. Azucena guided participants in developing concrete action plans to integrate music into city strategy, focusing on data mapping, stakeholder engagement, and measurable objectives.

The key takeaway: understanding data mappings, SWOT analysis, and other tools is essential for creating a strong and effective music city strategy.

- In this week's Local Impact Lab: Groups identified the main challenges & opportunities in their assigned city's music ecosystem using SWOT analysis.

Week 3



Vishruti Bindal
Head of Projects,
Sound Diplomacy Events
& Education



Jordi Puy
CEO,
Unison

Weekly focus: Challenges in Music Ecosystems
Session 1 - Case Studies: Overcoming Music Ecosystems Challenges
Session 2 Presentations: Music Ecosystem Initiatives in KSA

Summary of This Week's Sessions

- This case studies session explored global music ecosystem challenges and solutions. Vishruti Bindal highlighted urban policy issues like venue licensing, noise, and gentrification, showing how collaboration improved safety, sustainability, and night-time economies in cities such as Bogotá, Victoria, and Toronto. Jordi Puy presented Spain's Unison, a tech-driven approach to copyright management.

The key takeaway: collaboration, technology, and adaptive policy are essential for sustainable, efficient music ecosystems.

- This session featured presentations from participant groups, highlighting key initiatives in their assigned Saudi cities. Projects included Riyadh Music Week, uniting events to promote industry growth and cultural exchange; The Ithra Content Initiative, supporting Arabic language culture and media; and AlUla's Winter at Tantora Festival, leveraging heritage tourism to strengthen the local music scene. Discussions emphasised sustainability, local talent inclusion, and scene development.

The key takeaway: these initiatives reflect the ongoing structuring of Saudi Arabia's music industry.

- In this week's Local Impact Lab: Groups created a stakeholder checklist for their assigned cities, researching the existence of essential players such as recording studios, publishers, managers, venues, music shops etc.

Week 4



Natalia Bayona
Executive Director,
UN World Tourism Organisation



Pablo Borchi
Head of Marketing & Partnerships,
Sound Diplomacy
Events & Education

Weekly focus: Music Tourism
Session 1 - Masterclass: Music Tourism Policies
Session 2 - Workshop: Blueprint for Music Tourism - Creating Strategies & Structures

Summary of This Week's Sessions

- Natalia Bayona's masterclass explored music tourism as a driver for economic growth, cultural branding, and innovation. Natalia Bayona highlighted how music events boost hotel occupancy, support creative industries, and increase tourism revenue, especially in emerging regions like the Middle East and Africa. Drawing from global examples, she outlined strategies, from festivals and creative hubs to education and sustainability.

The key takeaway: leveraging music strategically can strengthen tourism and cultural development, with particular potential for Saudi Arabia.

- Pablo Borchi's workshop provided a blueprint for building music tourism strategies. Drawing on Mexico City's experience, he traced music tourism from aristocratic opera tours to today's gig-driven economies, highlighting global examples like Taylor Swift in Miami, Coldplay in Singapore, and Madonna in Rio.

The key takeaway: cities can maximise economic and cultural impact by combining narrative-building, local empowerment, and alignment of tourism with music heritage.

- In this week's Local Impact Lab: Groups looked at ways to promote better collaboration between music & tourism industries, identifying the main stakeholders & coming up with potential music tourism project ideas.

Week 5



Eduardo Saravia
Chief Economist,
Sound Diplomacy



Justin O'Connor
Professor,
University of South Adeleide



Takayuki Suzuki
Managing Director,
MusicTech Japan



Manojna Yeluri
Asia Regional Rep, Artists at Risk



Alick Sethi
Music Supervisor,
Retox Music

Weekly focus: Music Ecosystem & Your Place in It
Session 1 - Fireside Chat: The Ripple Effect of Music Ecosystems on Other Industries
Session 2 - Case Studies: Music Ecosystem Effects

Summary of This Week's Sessions

- In this Fireside Chat, moderated by Eduardo Saravia, Justin O'Connor discussed how culture, while operating within markets, risks losing its social and creative essence when reduced to economic value. Drawing on Manchester's 1980s music scene and global examples, they highlighted inequalities in cultural trade and platform-dominated challenges.

The key takeaway: holistic cultural policy should prioritise creative expression, local impact, and human creativity over mere commercialisation, supported by policies for small venues and experimental spaces.

- This case studies session explored the global music ecosystem and cross-industry collaboration. Takayuki Suzuki highlighted music-technology integration through virtual entertainment models like V Singer and Hatsune Miku. Manojna Yeluri focused on creative resilience, artist advocacy, and music education for the Global South. Alick Sethi discussed music supervision, brand collaborations, and AI-related copyright concerns.

The key takeaway: innovation, advocacy, and ethical considerations are crucial in today's evolving music landscape.

Week 6



Brahim El Mazned
Artistic Director
Visa For Music



Soleil Gharbieh
Programme Manager,
The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture



Sizo Hlophe
Project & Marketing Coordinator,
Sound Diplomacy
Events and Education



Kai Brennert
Director,
edgeandstory

Weekly focus: Toolkits & Further Actions
Session 1 - In Conversation With: Initiating International Collaboration & Music Export
Session 2 - Workshop: Grant Writing

Summary of This Week's Sessions

- This panel explored international opportunities and challenges for Saudi musicians. Brahim El Mazned, Soleil Gharbieh, and Sizo discussed platforms and funding, including Visa for Music showcases and AFAC grants, noting low Saudi participation due to mobility barriers and limited awareness.

The key takeaway: preserving cultural identity and actively engaging with available support is essential for strengthening Saudi artists' global presence.

- The final session of the Saudi Music Cities Exchange concluded the six-week program with a grant writing workshop led by Kai Brennert. Participants learned to align funding with project needs, eligibility, and ethical partnerships using backward design and theory of change frameworks. Resources included a grant assessment handbook, AI guidelines, SDGs, and a Music City Strategy template.

The key takeaway: structured planning and targeted resources are essential for effective project development and implementation & will make the grant writing easier.

Weeks 7 & 8

Weekly focus: Office Hours & Music City Snapshot Group Project

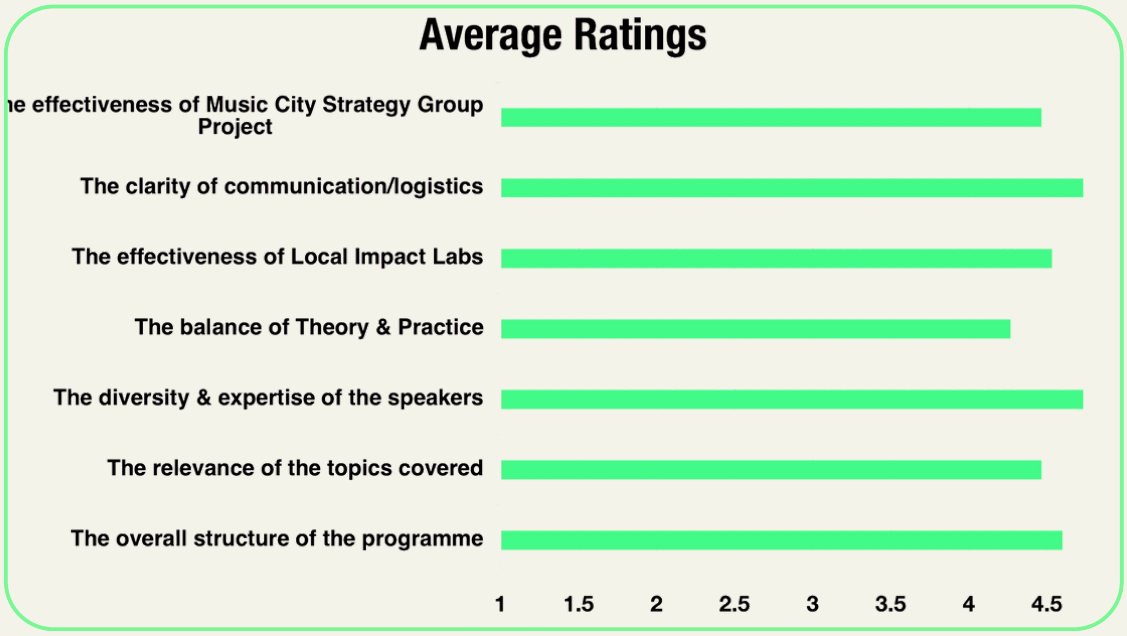
Summary of these Sessions

- In the final two weeks of the SMCE, participants focused on their group projects: the Music City Snapshots. These are strategy documents that analyse each city's music ecosystem and propose recommendations, drawing on the lessons and tools developed throughout the programme. They were encouraged to attend Office Hours with the programme's organising team for any writing & research support.

- The programme concluded with the Closing Presentations, where each team shared their findings. Common themes emerged across cities, highlighting the youthful and DIY spirit of their music ecosystems, alongside opportunities in music tourism, educational programmes for aspiring music professionals, and infrastructure development.

Participant Feedback

At the conclusion of the eight-week programme, all participants were asked to complete a mandatory feedback survey.



Average rating across the seven defining metrics : 4.54/5 or 91%

1. **The overall structure** of the programme: **4.6/5 or 92%**
2. **The relevance of the topics** covered: **4.5/5 or 90%**
3. The diversity and expertise of **the speakers: 4.7/5 or 94%**
4. **The balance between theoretical and practical** content: **4.3/5 or 86%**
5. The effectiveness of **Local Impact Labs**: **4.5/5 or 90%**
6. **The clarity of communication/logistics**: **4.7/5 or 94%**
7. The effectiveness of **Music City Snapshot Group Project**: **4.5/5 or 90%**

Further more, when asked about future intent & satisfaction of the programme

- **100%** would be interested in **future sessions or a continuation of this programme**.
- **100%** would like to attend **Sound Diplomacy Events and Education's future events**.
- **100%** would **recommend this programme** to a friend or a colleague in the music, cultural, or policy sector.

Participant Feedback Comments

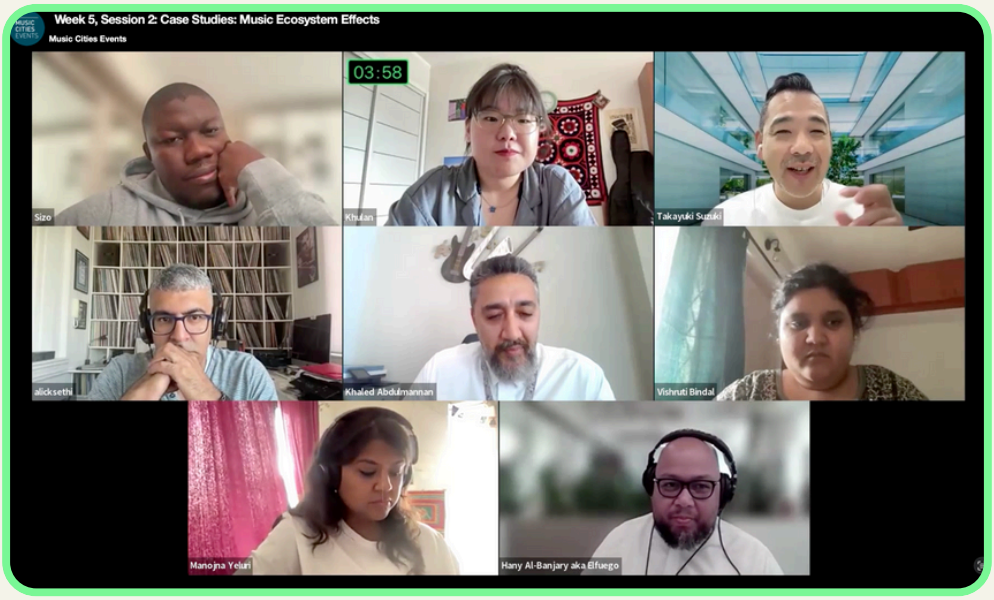
What was your biggest takeaway from the programme?

“Learning how to think strategically in music strategy building, and how to integrate it to the country’s needs. The different pillars of an effective music strategy.”

“The biggest takeaway from the Saudi Music Cities Exchange was realizing how powerful music in all its forms can be in shaping a city’s cultural identity. It showed me how global best practices can be adapted to Saudi Arabia’s unique context to help our music ecosystem grow. More than anything, it reinforced the importance of collaboration between artists, venues, and decision-makers, and it inspired me to work on creating more spaces and opportunities for local talent to connect with wider audiences”

“Getting to know more people in the country who share the same interest in the field, And especially in music production for ads and movies class, was what interested me the most.”

“My biggest takeaway from the programme is that there are a lot of gaps within the music industry in Saudi that need to be filled. But I also realise that these gaps are normal in any developing country, which is why I think it's important to take that into consideration.”



Is there anything you learned here that you’ll use in your work or projects?

“Yes, I have more realistic vision about the local music scene needs, which helps me to plan better for my future projects”

“Yes! The Music Tourism sessions were particularly insightful and will contribute to projects I'm involved in”

“The programme gave me ideas on how to connect artists, venues, and audiences in more meaningful ways, and how to adapt international best practices to fit our cultural and industry context in Saudi Arabia. I plan to use these insights to design events and initiatives that not only entertain but also help build a sustainable music culture.”

Testimonials

"Meticulously designed and thoughtfully executed, this programme successfully brought together leading local professionals to craft actionable strategies for strengthening and expanding Saudi Arabia's multi-city music ecosystems." - **Haya Al-Hejailan, Seera**

"I am truly grateful for their efforts and the added value this programme has provided, especially the excellent communication and follow-up services." - **Abdulrahman Balbaid, MOC**

"This program was very insightful! All the sessions and speakers provided valuable concepts and information that contribute to building a healthy and sustainable music strategy for a city. The Sound Diplomacy Events & Education team was very involved and helpful" - **Omar Ibrahim, Saudi Music Commission**

"An absolute barrage of insightful information that truly caters to the overall landscape of music locally" - **Abdulmalik Zubailah, MOC**

"The Saudi Music Cities Exchange was an inspiring and eye opening experience. It brought together passionate people from across the industry, created meaningful connections, and offered practical insights that I can apply directly to my work. It gave me a deeper understanding of how music can shape culture and community, and left me excited to contribute to the growth of Saudi Arabia's music ecosystem." - **Mohamed Ali, Arabia Pictures**

"One of the most beneficial programs I have been a part of -- it has really opened my eyes and inspired me within my work" - **Lama Aleidan, MOC**

"It was an amazing experience, gaining a lot of knowledge, sharing mine, and getting to know you all in the field" - **Yasser Yousuf, Koraspond**

"The Music Cities Exchange programme was truly inspiring. It opened my eyes to the power of collaboration in shaping a thriving music scene. It gave me practical tools and fresh motivation to contribute to Riyadh's growing music ecosystem." - **Hassan Khawaja, SRMG**

Appendix A: The List of SMCE Participants who completed the programme

City-Team	Name	Job Title, Organisation
Jeddah	Hania Bikan	Dj , Dj and Music Producer
	Emad Iskanderani	Emad Iskanderani, Musician
	Eyad Tarik	Eram, Owner
	Yasser Yousuf	Koraspond, Event Mangment
	Khaled Abdulmannan	Saudi Music Hub Jeddah Branch, Jeddah team leader
Riyadh	Diya Azzony	Music Commission, Head of talent development
	Hassan Khawaja	Freelancer, MUSICIAN-DJ-Music Production
	Mohammed Ali	Artist, Artist
	Sara Badawi	SAMIR STORES, PR
	Sohaib Al Borno	URX, Founder
AlUla	Abdalla Jastaniah	Saudi Music Hub, Lead Audio Engineer
	Ahmed Basbet	Gehlen, Resident DJ
	Hamad Aleyadhi	Freelance, DJ
	Omar Ibrahim	Saudi Music Commission, Saudi Music Heritage Preservation Senior Specialist
	Tanya Awad	MDLBEAST, Senior Manager - Music & Experiences

City-Team	Name	Job Title, Organisation
Dammam	Haya AlHejailan	Seera (the band) & The Fridge, Guitarist // Artist booking manager
	Hany Albanjary	Independent Artist, Artist
	Abdulrahman Balubaid	Music Commission, Head of PMO
	Lama Aleidan	Music Commission, Student and Admin Affairs Specialist
	Moe Moussa	Madhaus, Creative Director
	Gigi Arabia	Heavy Arabia Entertainment, CEO/Founder
Taif	Amin Tahir	Blacksound, Director of sound
	Ayman Nooh	Saudi Music Hub, Music production instructor
	Amer Alharbi	Keo International, Civil engineer
	Sultan Alrashed	MBC, Music Consultant
	Abdulmalik Zubailah	Ministry of Culture - Saudi Music Hub Jeddah, Assistant Audio Engineer
	Ayah Halilah	MDLBEAST Foundation, Marketing Manager

Appendix B: Music City Snapshots

1. Al Ula
2. Dammam
3. Jeddah
4. Riyadh
5. Taif

Music City Snapshot

SAUDI MUSIC CITIES EXCHANGE
SMCE

Al Ula

CONTENT:

- *Music Identity*
- *Key Stakeholders*
- *Stakeholder Presence Checklist*
- *Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis*
- *Recommendations – Solutions & Strategies*

1. Music Identity

Genres & Styles:

Seeing as Al Ula is predominantly an agricultural town, the music scene is currently represented through the high-profile events it hosts, such as performances at Maraya Concert Hall and the AZIMUTH festival. These events introduce a curated blend of genres: classical Western and Arabic music for the former, and electronic dance music (EDM) for the latter, performed by both local and international artists. While these genres dominate the official music offer, there is little evidence of a grassroots music scene, which suggests that AlUla's current music identity is shaped more by tourism programming than organic local development.





Cultural & Historical Influences:

AlUla's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site speaks volumes to its cultural depth. With Nabatean tombs, ancient trade routes, and Islamic-era settlements, the region's historical narrative is one of connectivity, spirituality, and resilience. While music has not been central to Al Ula's historical record, the city's unique environmental setting (rock formations, open valleys, and oasis landscapes) offers an immersive acoustic backdrop. This setting invites a site-specific approach to music programming, where sound can be used to reflect or interpret the land's story, allowing cultural expression to emerge from and respond to its context.



Audience Engagement:

Live music in Al Ula currently revolves around curated events, namely festivals and concerts

hosted in premium venues like Maraya or during seasonal programs such as Winter at Tantora and AZIMUTH. Audience engagement is mostly passive and tied to luxury tourism, with limited opportunities for local participation or public performance. There is little indication of a local music scene, and minimal year-round engagement. To develop a more vibrant and inclusive music city, public programming, participatory formats, and community-based events should be introduced.





2. Key Stakeholders

This section outlines the primary stakeholder types involved in Al Ula's music ecosystem and identifies current examples or gaps. It provides a foundation for mapping responsibilities and potential partnerships needed to grow the music scene.

Stakeholder Type	Local Examples
Artists	NA (no current established/emerging local artists)
Venues	Maraya Concert Hall
Music Businesses	NA (no formal ecosystem of record labels, publishers, or managers, etc.)
Public Sector	RCU (central driver for strategy, licensing, and development).
Education	NA (No music schools or formal training programs available locally).
Tourism	RCU (Integrates music into cultural tourism; could benefit from collaboration with Saudi Tourism Authority).
Media	RCU, Al Ula FM (Media presence exists but lacks localized music journalism or press)
Promoteres	RCU, MDLBEAST (independent promoters and bookers are rare but crucial for ecosystem variety).

Government Support:

Government policy in AlUla is primarily managed by the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), which plays a dual role in both enabling and regulating cultural activities. While RCU offers strong funding and infrastructure, there are limited pathways for independent licensing or grassroots organization, and permits are often tied to high-level events. To diversify the scene, policy frameworks must include grants for local artists, simplified permit processes for small-scale events, and long-term support for music education and industry development.

Business Engagement

At present, there is minimal direct engagement from local businesses in sponsoring or hosting music. The few examples include hospitality partnerships during Winter at Tantora and AZIMUTH, where hotels bundle concert access with accommodation. Restaurants and cafes do not currently host live performances or music-themed experiences. To build a stronger link between business and music, RCU could incentivize partnerships through sponsorship schemes or by developing music-friendly business zones in commercial areas.

3. Stakeholder Presence Checklist

This checklist provides a snapshot of the current music ecosystem in the city, highlighting the presence (or absence) of key stakeholders across music creation, performance, distribution, education, tourism, and governance. The checklist identifies strengths to build upon, and gaps that represent potential areas for development and investment.

Key:

Green tick mark ✅ – The city has a *thriving presence* of these stakeholders; no immediate action is needed.
Upward arrow ⬆️ – The city has *some presence*, but could *benefit from more* of these stakeholders.
Red cross ❌ – These stakeholders are *missing or severely underrepresented* in the city.

Stakeholder Group	Status	Notes
Music Creation		
Artists & Musicians	⬆️	Growing presence, but more support, visibility, and infrastructure are needed for grassroots talent.
Song-writers & Composers	❌	Vital roles missing from the local ecosystem; could be attracted through residencies or education programs.
Recording Producers	❌	Vital roles missing from the local ecosystem; could be attracted through residencies or education programs.
Recording Studios	❌	No established technical infrastructure yet; key to developing a self-sufficient creative hub.
Rehearsal Rooms	⬆️	Limited but emerging. Essential to expand for year-round artistic activity.
Mixing & Mastering	❌	No technical infrastructure yet—key to developing a self-sufficient creative hub.
Rights & Distribution		
Record Labels	❌	Local rights and distribution channels are nonexistent, limiting artist sustainability.

Publishers	❌	Local rights and distribution channels are nonexistent, limiting artist sustainability.
Managers	❌	Local rights and distribution channels are nonexistent, limiting artist sustainability.
Music Retail		
Record Shops	❌	These enhance community engagement and music education; potential for niche retail.
Instrument Shops/Makers	⬆️	Some presence; could be nurtured through craft-focused initiatives or training.
Sheet Music Shops	❌	These enhance community engagement and music education; potential for niche retail.
Live Performance		
Large Music Venues	✅	Maraya and other event spaces are iconic and world-class, suitable for high-profile events.
Midsized Music Venues	❌	Essential to create a year-round local scene and encourage grassroots performance culture.
Small Music Venues	❌	Essential to create a year-round local scene and encourage grassroots performance culture.
Theatre	⬆️	Some venues exist but are underutilized for music-based programming.
Promoters/Bookers		
In-House Promoters	✅	RCU and MDLBEAST provide consistent event management and support.
Independent Promoters	⬆️	Some interest is emerging. Need incentives to grow a scene outside institutional players.
Bookers	⬆️	Some interest is emerging. Need incentives to grow a scene outside institutional players.
Music Tourism		
Festivals	✅	Events like Winter at Tantora and AZIMUTH attract regional and international audiences.

Museums	⬆️	Strong heritage sector, but music focus is minimal. Potential for new exhibits or partnerships.
Tourism Board/ Cultural Office	✅	RCU integrates music with destination branding and strategic development.
Promotion		
Media	✅	Strong national and international media partnerships already in place.
Press	⬆️	National coverage is strong, but lacking local or regional music journalism.
Radio	✅	AlUla FM supports local engagement and music promotion.
Visual Creation		
Video Production	⬆️	Existing capacity could be scaled to support artist content and cross-sector projects (e.g., music-film).
Photography	✅	Frequent documentation of events and landscapes feeds promotional material.
Merchandise		
Merchandise Makers	❌	No local production of merchandise; opportunity for creative enterprise support.
Merchandise Sellers	⬆️	Exists in gift shops; opportunity to expand to artist-driven or event-based merchandise.
Governance		
Music Office/ Night Office	❌	Lacking governance structure for music (or at least lack of public data/information); needed for coordination, policy, and support.
Music Export Office	❌	Required to connect local talent with international markets.
Trade Bodies/ Associations	❌	Absence limits advocacy, artist protections, and collective development.

Music/Industry Education		
Music Schools	❌	No structured educational pathways; long-term risk to sustainability.
Youth Ensembles/ Orchestras	❌	No structured educational pathways; long-term risk to sustainability.
Music Business Courses	❌	No structured educational pathways; long-term risk to sustainability.
Other programmes/ Training	❌	No structured educational pathways; long-term risk to sustainability.
Performance Groups		
Choirs/Ensembles/ Orchestras	❌	No active performance groups or community music culture; needed to foster lifelong participation.
Societies/Associations	❌	No active performance groups or community music culture; needed to foster lifelong participation.
Clubs/Groups	❌	No active performance groups or community music culture; needed to foster lifelong participation.

Key Stakeholder Presence Summary

Al Ula boasts a strong foundation in live performance and tourism, with large venues, high-profile festivals (e.g. Winter at Tantora, AZIMUTH), and institutional support from bodies like the Royal Commission for AlUla. Media and visual production also show promising presence. However, there are significant gaps in the music creation infrastructure (such as the absence of recording studios, producers, and songwriters) as well as in rights and distribution, with no active record labels, publishers, or management representation.

Retail and education are other critical gaps. The lack of record shops, sheet music, and music schools limits both public engagement and professional development. Similarly, the absence of governance structures like a dedicated Music Office or Export Office hampers coordinated growth and international visibility.

These findings reveal strong business opportunities in establishing creative infrastructure (e.g. studios, rehearsal spaces), launching music education initiatives, developing local retail, and creating governance and trade bodies. Building up midsized and small venues would further enrich the local scene and offer more platforms for emerging talent. With strategic investment, the city can grow into a well-rounded music hub

4. Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis

This section outlines the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats shaping the development of Al Ula's music ecosystem. It helps identify strategic directions for growth, investment, and policy by highlighting the factors that can support or hinder a thriving, inclusive music scene.

	Strengths	**Weaknesses**
1	Unique landscape/ location (mountains, oasis, sand dunes, rock formations, valleys, etc).	Mainly large scale events.
2	Iconic hotels (e.g. habitas) and venues (e.g. Maraya).	Lack of smaller venues/performance opportunities.
3	One Governing body (RCU) (e.g. funding, development).	
	Opportunities	**Threats**
1	Integrate local culture into tourism/music tourism.	Expensive destination (travel, accommodation, etc.); thus limited audience profile (elite/exclusive).
2	Intimate settings: allows for more niche sounds/diverse scenes.	Seasonal destination.
3	Music residencies.	One Governing body (RCU) (e.g. licensing/bureaucracy).
4	Recording destination (for local, regional, and international artists).	

SWOT Analysis Summary

Al Ula's strengths lie in its breathtaking natural landscape and iconic infrastructure (such as Maraya Concert Hall, Habitas Hotel, Elephant Rock, etc.) which position it as a compelling destination for music tourism and high-profile events. A centralized governing body, the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), offers strong support for development and funding, ensuring consistency in vision and execution.

However, the current music offer is skewed towards large-scale, elite-oriented experiences, with a notable absence of smaller venues and grassroots performance opportunities. This limits local talent development and regular community engagement with music.

Opportunities abound in expanding the scene through culturally grounded programming and smaller, more intimate formats that showcase niche genres and foster diverse scenes. The unique setting also presents strong potential for music residencies and recording retreats that could attract regional and international artists alike.

Despite these prospects, there are key threats to consider. High costs related to travel and accommodation restrict audience diversity, making the city's music scene appear exclusive. Its seasonality further limits year-round activity. Additionally, while the RCU provides unified direction, it may also present bureaucratic bottlenecks, especially around licensing and creative freedom. Addressing these risks will be critical to unlocking the ecosystem's full potential.

5. Recommendations - Solutions & Strategies

5a) Music Tourism Strategy as a Catalyst

Target Definition

	Size	Trend	Affinity	Competitive Rivalry	Customer Acquisition Cost	Profitability
Cultural Experience Seekers	Medium to Large	Rising interest in authentic, immersive cultural travel	High interest in heritage, traditional arts, and local experiences	Medium; other heritage destinations are investing in cultural programming	Moderate; requires strategic storytelling and partnerships	High; tend to spend on boutique experiences and extended stays
Creative Professionals & Artists	Niche, but influential	High demand for artist residencies and unique recording environments	Strong emotional and creative connection to inspiring settings	Low to Medium	Low if leveraged through industry networks and grants.	Medium to high through long-term value and advocacy
Premium Event-Goers	Large within the GCC and international elite	Luxury travel tied to exclusive cultural and music events	High loyalty to top-tier experiences	High in the region, yet unique to local context	High, but yields high returns	Very high through bundled luxury services

Al Ula's Positioning

	Important	Distinctive	Superior	Communicable	Not Easily Copied

Al Ula as a Cultural Sanctuary	Offers unique combination of heritage and music	Natural landscapes fused with history and sound	Unlike any other destination in the region	Strong visual identity and storytelling	Tied to the location's geology, history, and heritage
Al Ula as a Recording and Creative Retreat	Fulfills creative industry needs	Isolation, beauty, and facilities (e.g. Habitas, Maraya)	High-end, inspiring setting for artists	Easily pitched to labels, artists, and managers	Relies on AlUla's unique physical and cultural setting
Al Ula as a Music Tourism Pioneer in the Region	Aligns with Saudi Vision 2030 and cultural transformation	Focus on both heritage and future music scenes	Offers both high-end events and grassroots potential	Strategically aligned with existing tourism narratives	First-mover advantage in this niche in the region

Strategic Conclusions:

- **Flagship Product**

Al Ula's flagship music tourism product is a **year-round music residency and showcase program**. Artists from across the region and globe are invited to live, create, and collaborate in Al Ula; drawing inspiration from its natural beauty, historical resonance, and cultural depth. These residencies culminate in intimate performances, open rehearsals, workshops, and cross-cultural showcases. Unlike traditional festivals, this model provides a continuous cultural pulse, reinforcing Al Ula's identity as a living music city, not just an event location. These programs can align with seasonal tourist flows and leverage existing infrastructure such as Maraya, heritage sites, and Habitas.

- **Narrative Identity**

Al Ula is not just a backdrop, it is a muse. The city's music tourism strategy tells the story of a land where echoes of the past inspire the sounds of the future. It invites visitors to step into a space where heritage, creativity, and nature converge. Rather than importing culture, Al Ula becomes a generator of new musical expression rooted in place, shaped by its landscapes, and shared with the world.

- ***Target Audiences***

Cultural travelers interested in immersive, meaningful experiences.

Musicians and creatives seeking unique places to work and connect.

Affluent tourists and VIPs looking for exclusive events and memorable settings.

Regional youth who see music as a gateway to identity, belonging, and creative futures.

To accomplish this strategy, there needs to be a collaboration between music and tourism organisations.

	Stakeholders	Roles
Music	**Local Artists & Ensembles**	Participate in residencies and performances.
	Record Labels & Managers	Facilitate artist participation, content distribution.
	Event Producers	Curate showcases, manage logistics.
	Music Educators	Lead workshops and community outreach.
Tourism	**RCU (Royal Commission for AlUla)**	Lead development, licensing, funding. Align with the Ministry of Tourism, Saudi Tourism Authority, etc.
	Hotels & Hospitality	Offer bundled cultural experiences.
	Tour Operators	Integrate music offerings into heritage and adventure tours.

	Marketing Agencies	Promote AlUla globally as a cultural destination.
	Cultural Institutions	Support programming, artist selection, and storytelling.

5b) Other recommendations

Al Ula can leverage several new possibilities to further enrich its music ecosystem.

Short-Term Strategies:

1. **Cross-Sector Collaborations:** Launch pilot initiatives that pair music with visual arts, film, or digital media. For example: live scoring of heritage documentaries or soundtracking immersive heritage exhibitions.
2. **Music & Tech Innovation Labs:** Host seasonal pop-ups or hackathons exploring music tech, immersive audio, and AI-generated sound in partnership with universities or tech hubs.
3. **IP Development Workshops:** Offer training for artists on intellectual property rights, sync licensing, and music business literacy to support long-term creative entrepreneurship.
4. **Local Showcases:** Host regular performances featuring local artists and ensembles, giving them platforms beyond festivals.

Long-Term Strategies:

1. **Creative Industries Hub:** Establish a permanent interdisciplinary campus or center for music, film, tech, and design collaboration, promoting year-round innovation and residencies.
2. **Content Export Programs:** Partner with music export offices and international festivals to promote Al Ula-born music and projects abroad.
3. **Digital Music Archive & Platform:** Build an interactive digital archive of Saudi and regional music traditions, combined with a streaming platform for curated local sounds.
4. **Regional Talent Accelerator:** Design a mentorship and funding program for emerging creatives across music and media industries, especially from underserved communities.

By nurturing both artistic creation and entrepreneurial infrastructure, these strategies aim to position Al Ula as a future-facing, globally connected, and locally grounded music city.

Music City Snapshot

SAUDI MUSIC CITIES EXCHANGE
SMCE

Dammam

CONTENT:

- ***Music Identity***
- ***Key Stakeholders***
- ***Stakeholder Presence Checklist***
- ***Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis***
- ***Recommendations – Solutions & Strategies***

1. Music Identity

Genres & Styles:

The music scene in my city is a fascinating mix of tradition, subculture, and experimentation. You'll hear *khaleeji* and *tarabiyat* holding space in cultural venues and gatherings—deeply emotive, rhythm-driven styles that keep our musical roots alive. At the same time, there's a thriving rock and metal presence, especially in the alt-rock space, where bands are constantly evolving their sound and pushing creative boundaries.

Jazz and fusion are alive and well too—often blending seamlessly with regional motifs or showing up in unexpected cross-genre collaborations. As someone who geeks out over arrangement and texture, it's exciting to see how these genres stretch and adapt.

On the experimental end, folk and even bluegrass make surprising appearances—usually in intimate, DIY-type shows. And then there's the electronic scene, from high-energy EDM to more conceptual, sound-art inspired work. A lot of producers here are doing interesting things by merging modular synths or ambient textures with traditional instrumentation.

It's a scene built on contrast and curiosity—people aren't afraid to mix the old with the new, the loud with the subtle. There's a real sense of creative freedom, and for someone like me who loves both the technical side and the raw, live energy of music, it's a pretty inspiring place to be.

Cultural & Historical Influences:

Geographical Influence

- Located on the Arabian Gulf—a historical crossroads for trade and migration.
- Cultural mix includes influences from Iran, India, East Africa, and the wider Gulf.

Traditional Gulf Music Roots

- Instruments: *oud*, *mirwas* (hand drum), and other traditional tools.
- Styles like *Samri* and *Ardah* reflect deep Gulf heritage.
- Rhythms are heavy, vocals soulful—rooted in collective memory and emotion.

Maritime Heritage

- Music shaped by lives of pearl divers, fishermen, and sea traders.
- *Fijiri* songs: call-and-response vocals, trance-like rhythms, echoing the sea.
- Themes of longing and survival tied to life on water.

Bedouin Influence

- Storytelling, oral poetry, and percussive elements central to older forms.
- Emphasis on intimacy and connection over performance.

Cultural Fusion

- Migrant communities introduced styles like *Liwa* and *Fann al-Tanbura*.
  These are rooted in healing rituals and group movement.
- Tradition is preserved—but also reinterpreted and evolved.

Modern Scene & Underground Movements

- Dammam has become a quiet hub for underground music (rock, rap, hip-hop, experimental).
- Younger artists are challenging mainstream norms and creating new sounds.
- The scene reflects a poetic tension between old and new, raw and refined.

Audience Engagement:

Bahrain (Nightlife Scene):

- Live music primarily found in lounges and nightlife venues.
- Performances usually feature cover bands and instrumentalists.
- The atmosphere is laid-back yet vibrant, attracting both locals and tourists.

Eastern Province (Saudi Arabia):

- Large-scale music events are rare.
  Last major event: Sharqiya Season (2019) with 2.3 million visitors.
    - Featured acts: Amr Diab, Pitbull, AON, Deadmau5, French Montana.
- The event did not return post-COVID, creating a gap in local music offerings.

Cross-Border Audience Behavior:

- Eastern Province residents often travel to Bahrain and Riyadh for live music.
- Destinations offer concerts, festivals, and nightlife experiences.

Key Insights:

- Audiences are receptive and enthusiastic about live music.
- Lack of consistent, localized programming limits access.
- Infrastructure and policy gaps hinder regular engagement.

2. Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder Type	Local Examples
Artists	1. Sound of Ruby 2. Gimmix 3. Sijjeel 4. Jazzmin 5. Mosaic 6. Oman Street 7. Inversion 8. 300+ instrumentalists and indie artists
Venues	1. Bohemia (Cafe/record store) 2. Cawalees 3. Fantakah Theater 4. Ithraa (stages) 5. Saudi Music Hub 6. Dhahran Expo (Dammam Arena, Emerald Hall) 7. Aramco Stadium. Opening in 2026
Music Businesses	1. Bohemia (cafe/music venue) 2. S Musicians (Booking Agent) 3. Notah (might be closedD) 4. ADdawalia (music store)
Public Sector	1. Saudi Music Hub 2. Ithra 3. Dhahran Expo
Education	Saudi Music Hub Independent education center
Tourism	1. Ithra 2. Bohemia 3. ECONOMIC ZONES 4. SPARK 5. MODON 6. Ras Al-Khair
Media	1. Ithra 2. Aramco Radio

	3. Destination KSA
Etc…	

Government Support:

Dual Role of Policy: Policy often acts as both an enabler and a barrier to the local music ecosystem.
Key Support Institutions:

- **Saudi Music Hub (Khobar)** – Operated by the Music Commission.
- **Ithra (Aramco)** – Hosts music programs like *SautaSura*.
- **GEA** – Permits & licensing.

Permits & Licensing:

- Centralized via GEA's "one-stop shop," but limited in accessibility.
  Permits restricted to entities with high minimum capital—regardless of event size.
- Bureaucratic and unclear application process deters small businesses and independents.
- Reduces flexibility, vibrancy, and scalability of grassroots events.

Grants & Funding:

- Cultural Development Fund (CDF) offers grants, but access is inefficient.
- Information is often vague or outdated.
- Ithra's cultural funds are more visible but skewed toward Arabic content.
- Limits inclusion for artists working in other languages or genres.

Recognition & Development:
No official regional scouting programs or awards for Eastern Province artists.

- Saudi Music Hub: Not utilized to showcase local talent. Only DIY cover band shows.
- National recognition (e.g., *Joy Awards*) focuses on major acts; limited support for emerging talent.
- "Favorite New Artist" Joy Awards category remains a symbolic gesture without deeper regional integration.

What's Needed:

- More inclusive and localized policy approaches.

- Transparent, scalable systems for permits and grants.
  Regional recognition platforms to spotlight and support homegrown talent.

Business Engagement:

- **Ithra (Aramco)**
    - Hosts high-quality music programs and performances.
    - Offers residencies and public-facing events like *Sawt wa Sura*.
    - Acts as a major cultural hub with advanced facilities.

- **Bohemia (Café + Record Store)**
    - Hosts regular live performances and listening sessions.
    - Promotes local artists through curated events and social media.
    - Functions as a grassroots incubator for independent talent.

- **Fantakah Theater**
    - Intimate venue for open mics and live music shows.
    - Supports up-and-coming musicians and local collectives.
    - Provides an accessible space for community engagement.

- **Current Landscape**
    - Business involvement is still limited overall.
    - Most support comes from public entities or independent organizers.
    - Opportunity exists for more local businesses to sponsor or integrate music into their brand strategies.

3. Stakeholder Presence Checklist

Write a small paragraph introducing this checklist (under 100 words)

This checklist provides an overview of the current presence and activity level of key stakeholders essential to building a vibrant music tourism ecosystem in Dammam.
It highlights strengths, identifies gaps, and pinpoints areas for strategic development across music creation, performance, education, governance, and promotion. Each stakeholder group is evaluated based on current visibility and engagement in the city, using the following key:

Key:

Green tick mark ✅ – The city has a *thriving presence* of these stakeholders; no immediate action is needed.
Upward arrow ⬆️ – The city has *some presence*, but could *benefit from more* of these stakeholders.
Red cross ❌ – These stakeholders are *missing or severely underrepresented* in the city.

Stakeholder Group	Status	Notes
Music Creation		
Artists & Musicians	⬆️	Sound of Ruby (pioneers) Sijjeel (+ S. Musicians list 300+ ppl)
Song-writers & Composers	❌	1. Bader Ahmed (Piano composer) 2. Mohammed AlHajjaj 3. Nader Fassam (arranger) 4. Abdullah Dhamen (songwriter) 5. Waleed Allswuiamel (songwriter 6. (Ali Zai's list)
Recording Producers	⬆️	1. Saeed Kurdi 2. Bader Alzahrani 3. Kamal Alnuiami 4. Fawaz Waleed 5. Maher 6. Ali Zaki 7. Ibrahim Alorfei (Roxs)
Recording Studios	⬆️	1. Saudi Music Hub 2. Tune Life Studio 3. Shams Studio 4. Recordings 5. أستوديو أ. ناصر الصالح 6. Sonic 7. Dareen Studios 8. Chadi Ashraf
Rehearsal Rooms	❌	1. Saudi Music Hub 2. Mostly home rehearsal rooms 3. Fantakkah Theater

		4. Cawalees
Mixing & Mastering	❌	1. Bader Alzahrani (studio) 2. Waleed Alsuwaimel (studio & live) 3. Kamal Alnuaimi (studio & live) 4. Chadi Ashraf 5. Ali Zaki 6. Fawaz Waleed
Rights & Distribution		
Record Labels	❌	NA
Publishers	❌	استوديو أ. ناصر الصالح
Managers	❌	S. Musicians مجموعة نغم الموسيقيه عود وكمنجه
Music Retail		
Record Shops	❌	1. Bohemia Cafe 2. Virgin Mega Store 3. Alrabie Records
Instrument Shops/Makers	❌	1. Adawliah Music Store 2. شركة صوت العرب الفني للتجارة 3. أعواد لحن الخليج للآلات الموسيقية 4. عالم الفن
Sheet Music Shops	❌	NA
Live Performance		
Large Music Venues	❌	Ithra, Dhahran Expo
Midsized Music Venues	❌	600) مسرح جامعة الظهران cap) جامعة الأصالة مسرح الغرفة التجارية
Small Music Venues	❌	Bohemia, Fantakah, Cawalees, مكتبة الدمام
Theatre	❌	Ithra

Promoters/Bookers		
In-House Promoters	❌	Bohemia S. Musicians Ithraa (publicity, promotion)
Independent Promoters	❌	Bohemia, S. Musicians
Bookers	❌	S. Musicians
Music Tourism		
Festivals	❌	Dammam Arabic Jazz Festival (2022) Shargiya Season (2021)
Museums	❌	مكتبة الدمام Ithra
Tourism Board/ Cultural Office	❌	Saudi Tourism Authority Ithra
Promotion		
Media	❌	MDL Beast
Press	❌	Destination KSA
Radio	⬆️	1. Energy/Aramco FM 2. MDL Beast Radio 3. Khuzama FM 4. MBC FM 5. Panorama FM 6. Mix FM 7. Alif Alif FM 8. Madar FM 9. Rotana FM
Visual Creation		
Video Production	⬆️	S. Musicians Dareen Studios Recordings + (A bunch of freelancers)

Photography	⬆️	S.Musicians
Merchandise		
Merchandise Makers	❌	محلات الدعاية والإعلان RMS Media Company
Merchandise Sellers	❌	Bohemia, Virgin Mega Store
Governance		
Music Office/ Night Office	⬆️	Music Commission/Saudi Music Hub
Music Export Office	❌	NA
Trade Bodies/ Associations	❌	جمعية الثقافة والفنون
Music/Industry Education		
Music Schools	⬆️	Saudi Music Hub أستوديو أ. ناصر الصالح معهد يعقلون
Youth Ensembles/ Orchestras	⬆️	Yawan Music Group S. Musicians Orchestra
Music Business Courses	⬆️	Saudi Music Hub
Other programmes/ Training	❌	S. Musicians (unofficial) training in stage performance, live mixing, music instrumentations,
Performance Groups		
Choirs/Ensembles/ Orchestras	❌	Saudi National Orchestra and Choir, based in Riyadh but with many members from Dammam
Societies/Associations	❌	جمعية الثقافة والفنون
Clubs/Groups	❌	S Musicians نغم عود وكمنجة

The checklist reveals that while Dammam's music creation scene is growing—with a strong base of artists, producers, and recording studios—there are major gaps across the broader music ecosystem. Key areas like rights and distribution, live performance infrastructure, artist management, and music business services remain largely undeveloped. This leaves many local talents without the necessary support to scale their work professionally.

There's clear momentum in radio and visual content creation, driven by independent artists and freelancers, but few official promoters or booking agents exist to connect them with broader audiences. The lack of midsize and large-scale venues, rehearsal spaces, and licensing-ready cafes also limits consistent live performance opportunities.

On the retail side, instrument shops exist but are scattered, and there's no real presence of record stores, sheet music suppliers, or structured merch operations—highlighting an untapped business opportunity. Similarly, music education is beginning to take shape, especially through the Saudi Music Hub, but more formal training in music business, management, and technical fields is needed.

Overall, Dammam's scene is driven by individual and grassroots efforts, but the lack of infrastructure creates bottlenecks. There are major opportunities for investment in management services, rehearsal and performance spaces, event promotion, retail, and formal education—particularly in areas that connect creativity to commerce. As interest in the arts grows, filling these gaps could help turn Dammam into a vibrant, sustainable music hub.

4. Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis

This SWOT analysis highlights the current state of the music ecosystem in Dammam and the wider Eastern Province. It explores the city's emerging strengths—like a growing indie scene, cultural diversity, and grassroots momentum—while also acknowledging key challenges, such as limited infrastructure and industry support. With increasing interest from younger audiences and cross-border potential with Bahrain, Dammam is positioned for growth. However, issues like talent migration, unclear regulations, and limited media coverage remain real threats to its development. This breakdown offers a clear view of where the scene stands—and where it could go next.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
1	Growing/present indie scene	Limited professional performance spaces (concert halls, theaters) Ali Zaki's perspective: the indie scene loses opportunities in other major cities due to the existing waiting list of local/regional artists.

2	Proximity to Bahrain allows for cross-border collaboration and audience exchange	Few professional studios or music training centers in the city
3	A growing young audience interested in modern and alternative music styles	Lack of artist managers, booking agents, and other music business professionals, official promoters like MDLBeast who is more focused on Jedah/AlUla/Riyadh
4	Grassroots music initiatives and independent community-driven events	Unclear career path for emerging artists in Dammam
5	Cultural diversity in the Eastern Province fosters a variety of musical influences	Fewer large-scale music events compared to Riyadh or Jeddah
6	Small performance venues (cafés, hotels) support local live music	Lounges & cafes tend to host/promote cover bands and instrumentalists.
7	Increasing government support through Vision 2030 and music-focused programs (Ithra)	Current venues and cafes do not have proper licensing to perform cover songs.
	Opportunities	**Threats**
1	Hosting joint music festivals or events with Bahrain and GCC countries	Lack of clear regulations for live performances and licensing
2	Attracting internal tourism from other Saudi regions through curated events	Social resistance to certain music genres or nightlife culture
3	Rising public and governmental support for creative industries	Talent drain to larger cities due to more visibility and infrastructure
4	Potential to shape a unique, diverse music scene that reflects the city's identity	Long-term funding and sponsorship uncertainty for music initiatives
5	Collaborations with universities and cultural centers to create music programs	Weak media coverage of the local music scene

Dammam's music ecosystem shows strong potential, driven by a growing indie scene, grassroots initiatives, and a culturally diverse population. Small performance venues like cafés and hotels offer platforms for local artists, while increasing government support through Vision 2030 and institutions like Ithra signal long-term promise. Proximity to Bahrain also creates opportunities for cross-border collaboration and shared audiences.

However, the scene faces notable structural challenges. There's a lack of professional infrastructure—few concert halls, studios, or music education centers—and a shortage of music business professionals like managers and promoters. Many venues aren't properly licensed, limiting the range of performances, especially for cover bands. As a result, artists often struggle to find a clear career path, and opportunities in larger cities tend to pull talent away from the region.

Despite this, opportunities are growing. Joint events with Bahrain and the wider GCC, internal tourism, and collaborations with cultural centers and universities could help build a more sustainable scene. Rising interest in alternative music among young audiences suggests there's a receptive market.

Still, threats like unclear performance regulations, social resistance to some genres, and inconsistent funding could stall progress. Without strong media coverage or institutional backing, local talent may continue to be overlooked.

Overall, while the foundations are promising, Dammam's music scene needs investment in infrastructure, industry professionals, and supportive policies to truly thrive.

5. Recommendations - Solutions & Strategies

5a) Music Tourism Strategy as a Catalyst

Define your target using this criteria:

	Size	Trend	Affinity	Competitive Rivalry	Customer Acquisition Cost	Profitability
Segment 1 Young Saudi creatives (ages 18–30)	Large	Growing interest in indie & alt music	High – strong cultural resonance	Moderate (competing with Riyadh/Jeddah)	Low (social media & peer influence)	High – loyal, repeat attendees

Segment 2 **Cross-border audiences from Bahrain & GCC**	Medium	Rising cross-GCC cultural tourism	Medium – regional affinity	High (Bahrain has more venues)	Medium	Moderate - valuable for brand growth
Segment 3 **Saudi domestic tourists seeking "offbeat" culture**	Medium	Trend of discovering alternative local scenes	Moderate – curiosity-driven	Low (few cities offer this angle)	Medium (requires packaging/offers)	High if paired with broader tourism packages

Define your positions using this criteria:

	Important	**Distinctive**	**Superior**	**Communicable**	**Not Easily Copied**
Positioning 1 **"Dammam – the underground pulse of Saudi music"**	Yes – taps into youth identity	Yes – different from polished mainstream scenes	Emerging – needs cultivation	Strong narrative appeal	Hard to replicate cultural roots
Positioning 2 **"Where the Gulf meets sound"**	Yes – regional blend is unique	Yes – mix of Bedouin, Gulf, indie	Yes – musical identity is rich	Yes – through programming & branding	Tied to geography, not easily copied
Positioning 3 **"The gateway**	Yes – appeals to	Yes – contrasts old vs new	Yes – supports both	Yes – fits institutional & indie voice	Hard to copy due to unique ecosystem

between tradition and experimentation”	all generations				

Strategic Conclusions:

- **Flagship Product**

  Shargeeya Music Week
  Museums similar to MUCEM (Marseille), Guggenheim Museum Bilbao & Ithra.

Dammam sits at the crossroads of vibrant tradition and dynamic modernity. Its standout music tourism offering could be “Corniche Beats: Dammam Soundscape Festival”, a multi-day event that blends contemporary performances with heritage-rooted experiences:

- Traditional meets modern: Start each evening with a live mezmar–inspired drum-and-stick dance performance (a UNESCO-recognized folk form) to honor Saudi musical roots. Followed with sets by regional indie, jazz, and electronic artists under the stars.
- Ithra as creative hub: Host masterclasses or acoustic sessions in collaboration with the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)—a top cultural landmark—bringing global and local talent into dialogue.
- Immersive Corniche experience: Stage concerts across the scenic Dammam Corniche, leveraging its coastal ambiance for open-air performances that engage families, tourists, and music lovers alike.
- Festival extras: Include pop-up marketplaces with local artisans and food vendors, and interactive workshops introducing visitors to regional rhythms and musical instruments.

This curated festival would shine a spotlight on Dammam’s cultural assets, foster creative exchange, and fill a gap in the national tourism landscape—drawing visitors seeking both authenticity and contemporary flair.

- ***Narrative Identity***

  The narrative is that Dammam is a city of crossroads and is the future sound of the Gulf coast.
  Dammam is a city of crossroads — where cultures, coastlines, and creativity meet. Our music tourism strategy tells the story of a city that honors its deep-rooted traditions while embracing the pulse of the future. As the beating heart of Saudi Arabia’s Eastern

Province, Dammam blends diverse influences from across the Gulf, Asia, and Africa, creating a rich sonic tapestry unlike anywhere else.

Here, the rhythm of the sea meets the energy of the streets. From traditional Saudi folk music and tribal percussion to rising genres like Khaleeji pop, electronic fusion, and spoken word, Dammam is shaping the future sound of the Gulf coast.

This narrative positions Dammam not just as a destination, but as a creative force — a place where local artists and global talent collaborate, perform, and inspire. Our strategy highlights Dammam as a living stage, where music is a language of identity, innovation, and connection.

Visitors will discover a city that surprises them — where modern soundscapes echo ancient roots, and where every beat tells a story of transformation, diversity, and bold cultural ambition.

- ***Target Audiences***

Target Audiences – Who Are We Aiming to Attract?

Our music tourism strategy is designed to attract a diverse range of visitors, aligned with Dammam's identity as a cultural crossroads and emerging creative destination on the Gulf coast.

1. Young Cultural Explorers (Ages 18–35):
Social, curious, and experience-driven travelers from across Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region who are drawn to live performances, local creativity, and vibrant coastal energy. Music festivals, beach concerts, and interactive events are tailored for this segment.

2. Domestic Travelers & Weekend Tourists:
Residents from Riyadh, Jeddah, and nearby Eastern Province cities seeking short, enriching escapes. Dammam's mix of music, food, and culture provides an ideal weekend destination.

3. Families and Leisure Travelers:
Visitors looking for family-friendly, safe, and enriching cultural experiences. Music events at venues like Ithra, interactive workshops, and outdoor concerts offer activities suitable for all ages.

4. Creative Professionals & Music Enthusiasts:
Artists, musicians, and cultural tourists eager to discover local talent, collaborate, or attend unique performances. Open-mic nights, artist residencies, and music exhibitions will engage this niche but influential group.

By targeting these audiences, Dammam can position itself as a forward-looking, inclusive, and vibrant destination—where the sounds of the future meet the spirit of the Gulf

To accomplish this strategy, there needs to be a collaboration between music and tourism organisations.

Music Stakeholders	**Roles**
Local Musicians and Bands	Provide live performances, contribute to cultural identity, and engage in collaborations.
Independent Music Promoters	Organize events, curate lineups, and connect local talent with international artists.
Ithra (King Abdulaziz Center)	Host concerts, workshops, and residencies; serve as a platform for cultural experiences.
Music Academies & Cultural Groups	Develop local talent, preserve musical heritage, and offer traditional music workshops.
Recording Studios / Producers	Support artists in producing quality music for local and international audiences.
Music Licensing Bodies	Ensure legal compliance and proper usage of music during events.
Radio Stations & Media Platforms	Promote artists and events, expand the scene's reach through digital and traditional media.
Event Production Companies	Manage logistics, sound, stage, and event execution professionally.

Tourism Stakeholders	Roles
Saudi Tourism Authority (STA)	Support funding, integrate music tourism in national strategies, and promote globally.
Dammam Municipality	Provide permits, public spaces, and infrastructure for events.
Hotels and Hospitality Groups	Offer visitor packages, promote music events, and host performers or tourists.

Eastern Province Tourism Office	Coordinate local efforts, support marketing, and connect cultural sites with music events.
Travel Agencies and Tour Operators	Include concerts and festivals in tourism packages and itineraries.
Airport and Transportation Services	Promote events to visitors, provide access and signage to venues.
Local Businesses and Food Vendors	Enhance visitor experience through pop-ups, food stalls, and event partnerships.
Influencers & Travel Content Creators	Share the music tourism story through social media and online content.

5b) Other recommendations

Music Tourism Strategy Collaborations:

- Potential organizations within a city that could collaborate on a music tourism strategy include entities from both the music and tourism industries.
- From the music industry, independent artists and DJs, event organizers and local collectives, music producers and studios, cultural institutions like a Music Commission, music content creators and influencers, music stores/venues, and record stores could be involved
- From the tourism side, the Eastern Province Tourism Authority, the local hospitality sector (hotels, resorts, cafés), tour operators, destination marketing organizations, Aramco cultural and community centers, and cultural and heritage centers (e.g., Ithra) are key stakeholders
- Specific examples of potential partnerships include "Dammam Music Nights at Coastal Resorts" involving hotels & resorts, local DJs, the Tourism Authority, and the Music Commission.
- Another is "Music & Heritage Trails (Interactive City Tours with Music Stops)" which could involve tour operators, local artists, cultural centers (e.g., Ithra), tourism offices, and media production teams.

Furthermore, artist development programs can be created through collaboration between Music Collectives and the Music Commission/Saudi Music Hub.

- Create a music specific survey for Dammam’s residents to assess their needs and co-create a living breathing music strategy in collaboration with the people directly affected.

- Pair Dammam with a city that shares deep musical heritage and has navigated similar paths of cultural growth. This sister-city model would promote exchange residencies, educational programs, and joint festivals.
  (Ex; Manama - Bahrain, Marseille - France, New Orleans - USA)
- Artist residencies and cross cultural collaborations.
- Developing an active partnership with Bahrain's music industry stakeholders to collaboratively and cohesively shape a mutually beneficial music ecosystem.
- Launch an annual Shargeeya Music Week/ Shargeeya Music Month
- Establish a museum similar to Marseille's MUCEM (Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations) that highlights the musical heritage of Gulf Civilizations, doing so as a strategy to turn Dammam into the go to city for music tourism on the gulf.

Cross Collaboration with other industries:

Film

- Collaborate with the Saudi Film Festival to host film scoring workshops, tracks highlighting Music in Film, etc..

Tech

- Incubate startups and creative coders exploring AI in sound design, immersive music experiences, and music-focused apps.
- Collaborate with ARAMCO's innovation department to integrate music and AI.
- Organize a conference on the intersection of Music and Tech (LONG TERM)
- Organize a regional Music Hackathon hosted in Dammam (SHORT TERM)
- Partner with universities and gaming companies to explore music in interactive media.

IP

- Offer workshops on copyright, royalties, and publishing to protect artists' work - at Ithra & Saudi Music Hub.
- Set up a local IP resource hub with legal support for music creators and startups - potentially at the Saudi Music Hub.
- Facilitate regional licensing agreements and royalty collection systems (CMO).

With this in mind, these are some potential short-term & long-term strategies:

Short-Term Strategies:

- Launch a music needs survey targeting Dammam residents
- Organize a regional Music Hackathon in partnership with universities
- Host film scoring workshops during the Saudi Film Festival
- Run IP and music business workshops at Ithra and Saudi Music Hub

- Pilot “Music x Heritage” walking tours with live performances
- Host pop-up DJ nights in collaboration with cafés and hotels
- Initiate residencies for local and visiting artists (start with Bahrain)

Long-Term Strategies:

- Establish Shargeeya Music Month as an annual anchor festival
- Build a Gulf Music Heritage Museum to celebrate regional sounds
- Develop cross-border licensing systems (royalties, copyright)
- Launch an incubator for music-tech startups (AI, immersive audio)
- Host a Music x Tech Conference in collaboration with ARAMCO and universities
- Create a formal sister-city program with Manama or Marseille for cultural exchange
- Establish a Dammam Creative Council uniting music, tourism, and policy stakeholders

Music City Snapshot

SAUDI MUSIC CITIES EXCHANGE
SMCE

Jeddah

CONTENT:

- ***Music Identity***
- ***Key Stakeholders***
- ***Stakeholder Presence Checklist***
- ***Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis***
- ***Recommendations – Solutions & Strategies***

1. Music Identity

Genres & Styles

Jeddah's scene blends Arabic pop, Khaleeji, hip-hop/trap, Afrobeats, EDM, indie/alt, and traditional Hijazi sounds (mizmar, sambrah). MDLBEAST's Balad Beast anchors large-scale electronic/urban programming, while Hayy Jameel and smaller spaces nurture acoustic, jazz, world and experimental work. Concerts at Jeddah Superdome and Jeddah Season offer mainstream Arab and international acts. A growing ecosystem of producers/DJs coexists with choirs, ensembles and cultural groups revitalizing heritage repertoires.

Cultural & Historical Influences

As the Red Sea gateway and historic Hejazi port, Jeddah absorbed musical currents from Africa, the Levant and the Indian Ocean. Al-Balad's courtyards and wedding traditions sustain percussive rhythms (mizmar, tar/bendir) and call-and-response vocals. The city's cosmopolitan trade history and contemporary Vision 2030 cultural opening shape today's hybridity—where heritage meets global club culture and film/arts crossovers (e.g., Hayy Cinema).

Audience Engagement

Audiences engage via mega-festivals (Balad Beast), stadium/superdome concerts, Jeddah Season activations, beach clubs/pop-ups, and community programs at Hayy Jameel. Youth skew toward EDM/hip-hop; families attend orchestral/cultural shows; tourists encounter music as part of historic-district night experiences and Red Sea leisure itineraries.

2. Key Stakeholders

The table lists the principal stakeholder categories in Jeddah's music ecosystem with indicative local examples. It mixes public, private and non-profit actors across creation, performance, education and tourism.

Stakeholder Type	Local Examples
Artists	DJs/producers, Khaleeji/Arabic pop singers, indie bands, choirs, orchestras
Venues	Jeddah Superdome; Al-Balad outdoor sites; Hayy Jameel (Fenaa Hayy, Hayy Cinema formats); hotels/beach venues

Music Businesses	Event promoters (incl. MDLBEAST in Jeddah activations); studios; backline; AV; ticketing
Public Sector	Ministry of Culture (Music Commission); Ministry of Tourism; Jeddah Historic District Program; Municipality
Education	Saudi Music Hubs (Jeddah); private academies; Hayy Learning programs
Tourism	Visit Saudi/Jeddah Season; tour operators curating Al-Balad night experiences
Media	Local radio; regional platforms; social creators; press covering culture/entertainment
Etc…	Universities; youth groups; community ensembles; brand sponsors

Government Support

Policy support is improving under Vision 2030. The Music Commission leads sector development (education programs, accessibility initiatives, orchestral development) and supports a nationwide network of Music Hubs that includes Jeddah. Event permitting for Al-Balad and large venues is clearer than in the past; collaboration with Jeddah Historic District Program helps align heritage protection with live activations. Tourism policies integrate music within seasonal programming (Jeddah Season). Remaining needs: streamlined licensing for small venues; clearer guidelines for street/public-space performance; micro-granting for grassroots promoters; and export support for Jeddah-based artists.

Business Engagement

Local businesses increasingly sponsor or host music: (1) MDLBEAST partners deliver Balad Beast using heritage-district stages with brand activations; (2) Hayy Jameel's resident businesses curate workshops and ticketed programs in Fenaa Hayy/Hayy Cinema; (3) Hotels, malls and waterfront venues present seasonal live sets aligned with tourism campaigns.

3. Stakeholder Presence Checklist

Use the checklist to gauge presence and maturity. Mark thriving areas ✅, growth areas ⬆️, and gaps ❌. Statuses reflect today's snapshot and can shift quickly with policy or investment.

Stakeholder Group	Status	Notes
Artists & Musicians	✅	Strong DJ/producer and Arabic-pop base; heritage ensembles active
Song-writers & Composers	⬆️	Growing pool; needs professionalization and publishing literacy
Recording Producers	⬆️	Active in EDM/hip-hop/pop; limited in orchestral/jazz niches
Recording Studios	⬆️	Small/midsize studios exist; demand spikes during seasons
Rehearsal Rooms	⬆️	Available but limited; need affordable community rooms
Mixing & Mastering	⬆️	Freelance specialists present; demand for higher-end rooms
Record Labels	⬆️	Regional indies; brand/artist services more common than classic labels
Publishers	❌	Minimal dedicated local publishing infrastructure
Managers	⬆️	Emerging managers; need training/export networks
Record Shops	❌	Niche/online only

Instrument Shops/Makers	⬆️	Retail present; maker ecosystem limited
Sheet Music Shops	❌	Rare; digital alternatives
Large Music Venues	✅	Jeddah Superdome; outdoor Al-Balad sites (festival format)
Midsized Music Venues	⬆️	Hotel ballrooms, theatres—growing but fragmented
Small Music Venues	⬆️	Pop-ups/cafés exist; need stable licensing
Theatre	⬆️	Cultural venues host concerts/film-music crossovers
In-House Promoters	✅	Venue/operators program seasons
Independent Promoters	⬆️	Active; benefit from micro-grants and clearer permitting
Bookers	⬆️	Function exists within venues/agencies; needs training
Festivals	✅	Balad Beast; Jeddah Season platforms
Museums	⬆️	Hayy Arts/heritage spaces support music-related programming
Tourism Board/Cultural Office	✅	Visit Saudi/Jeddah Season; Jeddah Historic District Program

Media	⬆️	Coverage improving; leverage creators/influencers
Press	⬆️	Regional culture desks cover marquee events
Radio	⬆️	Mainstream formats; space for specialist shows
Video Production	✅	Strong ad/creator scene; festival content
Photography	✅	Event/creator economy established
Merchandise Makers	⬆️	Screen-printing and fashion collabs exist
Merchandise Sellers	⬆️	Pop-ups/online; scope for official stores
Music Office/Night Office	❌	No dedicated city music office yet
Music Export Office	❌	Missing; national/global partnerships needed
Trade Bodies/Associations	⬆️	Creative-industry groups emerging
Music Schools	⬆️	Music Hub + private academies; capacity to grow
Youth Ensembles/Orchestras	⬆️	School/community groups; room to scale
Music Business Courses	⬆️	Workshops short courses; few accredited pathways
Other programmes/Training	⬆️	Residencies, masterclasses via Hayy/partners

Choirs/Ensembles/Orchestras	⬆️	Active but need platforms and touring circuits
Societies/Associations	⬆️	Community cultural groups present
Clubs/Groups	✅	DJ collectives, creator communities, university clubs

Checklist Summary

Strength in venues, festivals and audience demand creates immediate opportunities in artist services (management, publishing), rehearsal/production infrastructure, and year-round midsize programming. Policy levers—micro-grants, small-venue licenses, and export support—could unlock SME growth and stabilize the grassroots layer while sustaining marquee events.

4. Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis

The SWOT reflects stakeholder interviews and recent programming trends across heritage and contemporary scenes.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Iconic heritage setting (Al-Balad) enabling destination festivals and authentic experiences **• Large-format venues (Jeddah Superdome) and seasonal tourism platforms (Jeddah Season)** **• Youthful, diverse audience with appetite for new genres and global acts** **• Cross-disciplinary arts ecosystem at Hayy Jameel (learning, cinema, performance)** **• Backed by Vision 2030 cultural policy and Music Commission programs**	**• Limited publishing/management/export infrastructure for artists** **• Inconsistent year-round small/midsize venue circuit** **• Skills gaps in production, sound engineering, and music business** **• Permitting clarity for grassroots/public-space performance still evolving** **• Data transparency on audience/market size remains limited**
Opportunities **• Scale Balad-based night economy experiences linking food, heritage and music** **• Develop a curated midsize venue network and seasonal residencies** **• Launch Jeddah Music Office and an Export Pilot for artists**	Threats • Event-dependent revenues vulnerable to seasonality or policy shifts • Regional competition for festivals/touring (Riyadh, Dubai, Doha) • Rising costs for production and international talent • Noise/heritage constraints in protected

• **Education pipelines via Music Hub + industry apprenticeships** • **Brand/sports/tourism tie-ins (waterfront, film, fashion weeks)**	districts if unmanaged • Economic shocks affecting discretionary spend and sponsorship

SWOT Summary

Jeddah's strengths in place-making and audience demand position it to lead Red Sea music tourism. Closing gaps in artist services, small-venue licensing and skills will diversify income and reduce seasonality risk. Early wins: export pilot, residency circuit, and Balad night-economy products.

5. Recommendations – Solutions & Strategies

5a) Music Tourism Strategy as a Catalyst

Segment	Size	Trend	Affinity	Competitive Rivalry	Customer Acquisition Cost	Profitability
Red Sea Leisure Tourists	Large (tens of thousands/season)	Rising with new resorts & cruises	High for experiential nights	Medium vs. regional beach cities	Medium via bundled passes	High via packaging
GCC Weekenders/Youth	Large in peak weekends	High for EDM/hip-hop	Very high for festival culture	High vs. Riyadh/Dubai/Doha	Medium through social/influencers	High during seasons
Culture Travelers/ Families	Medium	Growing with Al-Balad/film/arts	High for heritage & orchestral shows	Low-medium	Low via cultural calendars	Medium-high

Positioning	Important	Distinctive	Superior	Communicable	Not Easily Copied

Old City, New Sounds (Balad Nights)	Yes	Yes (heritage courtyards)	Yes (immersive routing)	Yes	Moderate—heritage access is unique
Red Sea Sunset Sessions	Yes	Yes (waterfront/sea)	Yes (iconic visuals)	Yes	Medium—requires permits/sites
Jeddah Residency Circuit	Yes	Yes (arts+film crossover)	Yes (learning + shows)	Yes	Higher—capabilities & partners

Strategic Conclusions

Anchor the brand on Al-Balad's authenticity while creating repeatable products that extend beyond one weekend: a curated residency circuit linking Hayy Jameel, midsize theatres and waterfront stages; bundled passes and family-friendly orchestral/heritage nights; and export tie-ins that spotlight Jeddah artists abroad.

Flagship Product

"Balad Nights: Old City, New Sounds" — a year-round series that transforms Al-Balad courtyards into intimate, ticketed concerts (300–1,500 capacity) across rotating routes. Each night pairs a Jeddah headliner/DJ with a heritage ensemble and guest international act; includes guided heritage tours, food markets and merch pop-ups. Seasonal 'Plus' editions scale up around Balad Beast to capture international demand.

Narrative Identity

Jeddah is the Red Sea port where music has always arrived from somewhere else—and become something new. From mizmar rhythms to global club sounds, the city remixes heritage and horizon into a welcoming night culture.

Target Audiences

Primary: GCC youth and young professionals seeking distinctive night experiences; Secondary: culture-minded families and international leisure tourists; Tertiary: creators/film communities who cross-pollinate programming.

Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholders	Roles
Music	Artists, promoters, venues, Music Hub/academies deliver content; Music Office (when created) coordinates calendars and micro-grants.
Tourism	Visit Saudi/Jeddah Season, Jeddah Historic District Program, tour operators bundle tickets, logistics, and heritage access.

5b) Other Recommendations

• Establish a Jeddah Music Office pilot to coordinate permitting, micro-grants (SAR 10–50k), and a city-wide events calendar.
• Create a Midsize Venue Network (5–8 partners) with shared standards (sound limits, load-in, ticketing) and quarterly residencies.
• Launch an Export & Publishing Lab: workshops + showcases; connect artists to regional publishers/managers; fund 10 export missions.
• Develop skills via paid apprenticeships in live sound, stage management and A/V production in partnership with Music Hub and venues.
• Data & insights: a lightweight box-office/ticketing dashboard and annual audience survey to guide programming and sponsorship.

Music City Snapshot

SAUDI MUSIC CITIES EXCHANGE
SMCE

Riyadh

CONTENT:

- ***Music Identity***
- ***Key Stakeholders***
- ***Stakeholder Presence Checklist***
- ***Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis***
- ***Recommendations – Solutions & Strategies***

1. Music Identity

Genres & Styles:

Riyadh's musical landscape is rapidly evolving. Western-influenced genres, including Electronic, House, Techno, Hip-Hop, Pop, And Rap, have surged in popularity, primarily driven by platforms such as MDLBEAST, which produces the flagship SoundStorm festival and the newer A Thousand and One festival.

Alongside this mainstream momentum, a vibrant underground rock and metal scene persists, with local bands like Dune and Crimson gaining traction despite historical constraints. A noteworthy development is the emergence of female-led groups. In parallel, Khaleji music—traditional Gulf music rooted in Bedouin poetry and instruments such as the oud, rebab, merwas, and duff continues to influence contemporary fusions, especially in pop and electro Khaleji hybrids.

World-renowned artists Muse, Eminem, Akon, Linkin Park, Camila Cabello, J LO, Hans Zimmer, Tarkan, Tul8te, are all performing this season in Riyadh. This fusion creates a unique auditory experience, reflecting the diversity and creativity of the country's new generation.

Cultural & Historical Influences:

In the central region of Najd, traditional Saudi Arabian folk music reflects the vast deserts and deep tribal roots. The music here is poetic, with verses that speak of love, honour, and the challenges of desert life.

The Samri, a popular genre in Najd, is performed with a mesmerizing combination of handclaps and a rhythmic chorus. Men form a circle, swaying in harmony as they sing. This performance often marks joyous occasions like weddings.

Another significant style is the Ardah, famously performed with swords. It's a ceremonial dance, rich in symbolism, often seen during national celebrations or when welcoming honoured guests.

More recently, social and cultural reforms under Vision 2030 have catalysed a vibrant, youth led cultural renaissance. Government initiatives and festivals, such as Riyadh Season and MDLBEAST, have encouraged experimentation and genre blending, merging Khalji rhythms with Hip Hop, Electronic Beats, And Rock elements, thereby preserving tradition while embracing global modernity.

Audience Engagement:

Vision 2030 has made public events, entertainment areas, and social gatherings more common in cities like Riyadh.

High-energy participation at festivals like MDLBEAST, intimate vibe-focused nightlife in lounges and hotels, public performances in malls and urban hubs, with social media boosting artist visibility and community interaction.

(Riyadh Boulevard City) This venue gives a hypnotic Saudi Arabia nightlife experience with electrifying concerts, spectacular light shows, and a brilliant replica of New York's Times Square. It is free entry, and a wide range of activities make it a must-visit.

2. Key Stakeholders

The table below outlines key stakeholder types within Saudi Arabia's music and cultural ecosystem, paired with notable local examples. It highlights the diverse players shaping the industry—from artists and venues to government bodies, education institutions, tourism, and media—illustrating the interconnected network that supports and drives the country's creative and entertainment sectors.

Stakeholder Type	Local Examples
Artists	Sultan Khalifa, Ayed, Nawal, DJ Mubarak, Majed Al Eissa,
Venues	Abu Bakr Salem, Kingdom Arina, KFCC, Vocally Riyadh, Beast House, The Areana, Venue 13.
Music Businesses	Event Organizers (e.g., MDLBEAST, Benchmark, Desert Sound…etc.), Sound Engineers, Managers, Booking Agents, Creative Directors.
Public Sector	Saudi Music Commission, Ministry of Culture, GEA
Education	Saudi Music Hub, The Royal Institute of Traditional Arts (WRTH), Music Home - Riyadh, Music House KSA
Tourism	Riyadh Season, Diriyah Season, Saudi Tourism Authority
Media	Thagafya, Arab News, Scene Noise, MBC Group, Billboard Arabia
Etc…	Cultural festivals like A Thousand and One and Many Other event organisers like (Yellow Plus, Desert Sound, Vocally, Glitch, URX ... (..etc

Government Support:

Basically, government policies organize the scene and create stability and in force a

unified system and law to the scene for everyone to work in harmony and to be professional.

On the other hand, the General Entertainment Authority (GEA) and the Music Commission under the Ministry of Culture play key roles in regulation, support, and industry development.

Business Engagement:

Some local businesses do need to host events and sponsor and promote music for them to be more recognizable and to support their services, especially social and entertainment businesses.

3. Stakeholder Presence Checklist

This Stakeholder Presence Checklist offers a clear overview of the current state of Riyadh's music ecosystem. It helps identify which key players such as artists, venues, promoters, and educational bodies are active, emerging, or missing entirely.

By using simple symbols to indicate each group's presence, this tool highlights strengths, gaps, and opportunities for growth. It serves as a guide for policymakers, investors, and creatives to better understand where support and development are most needed to build a thriving and sustainable music city.

Key:

Green tick mark ✅ – The city has a *thriving presence* of these stakeholders; no immediate action is needed.
Upward arrow ⬆️ – The city has *some presence*, but could *benefit from more* of these stakeholders.
Red cross ❌ – These stakeholders are *missing or severely underrepresented* in the city.

Stakeholder Group	Status	Notes
Music Creation		
Artists & Musicians	✅	Growing local scene with rising talents.
Songwriters & Composers	⬆️	Present but not widely visible or credited.

Recording Producers	⬆️	Some are active, but more mentorship is needed.
Recording Studios	⬆️	Limited number; need more accessible spaces.
Rehearsal Rooms	❌	Largely unavailable or private only.
Mixing & Mastering	⬆️	Present, but access and quality vary.
Rights & Distribution		
Record Labels	❌	Lack of structured local labels.
Publishers	❌	Almost non-existent.
Managers	⬆️	Some informal management; no industry standard.

Music Retail		
Record Shops	❌	Niche or rare.
Instrument Shops/Makers	✅	Well-represented across Riyadh.
Sheet Music Shops	❌	No strong presence.
Live Performance		

Large Music Venues	⬆️	Few large venues allow music; need more.
Mid sized Music Venues	✅	Thriving with events and programming.
Small Music Venues	✅	Abundant, especially for emerging acts.
Theatre	⬆️	Growing but limited for modern music events.

Promoters/Bookers		
In-House Promoters	✅	Active in most venues.
Independent Promoters	⬆️	Emerging scene with potential.
Bookers	⬆️	Informally organized; professional development needed.
Music Tourism		
Festivals	⬆️	increasing, but seasonal and not yet diverse.
Museums	❌	No dedicated music museums.

Tourism Board/ Cultural Office	⬆️	Involved but can increase music-specific support.

Promotion		
Media	⬆️	Coverage is growing, but still selective.
Press	⬆️	Some spotlight on music, not consistent.
Radio	❌	Limited support for local music.
Visual Creation		
Video Production	✅	Strong presence of creatives.
Photography	✅	Actively supporting the scene.

Merchandise		
Merchandise Makers	⬆️	Present, but largely DIY and informal.

Merchandise Sellers	⬆️	Room for retail expansion.
Governance		
Music Office/ Night Office	❌	No official entity yet.
Music Export Office	❌	Not established.
Trade Bodies/ Associations	⬆️	A few initiatives exist, still informal.

Music/Industry Education		
Music Schools	✅	Active and increasing in number.
Youth Ensembles/ Orchestras	❌	Very few opportunities or access.
Music Business Courses	❌	No structured programs available.
Other programmes/ Training	⬆️	Available occasionally, not consistent.
Performance Groups		

Choirs/Ensembles/ Orchestras	⬆️	Growing in academic and expat circles.
Societies/Associations	⬆️	Emerging but need formal support.
Clubs/Groups	✅	Active music groups and communities.

Riyadh's music ecosystem shows strong presence in talent, venues, and visual creatives. However, there are clear gaps in areas like rehearsal spaces, record labels, music business education, and promotion platforms. These gaps present key business opportunities especially in setting up studios, training programs, management services, and music focused media. Strengthening these areas will support emerging artists and help build a more sustainable and professional music industry in the city.

4. Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis

Riyadh's music ecosystem is in a period of rapid growth, driven by cultural reforms, a young and engaged population, and increasing global attention. However, it faces challenges in infrastructure, industry maturity, and accessibility.
The following SWOT analysis highlights the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, providing a clear view of the factors that will shape its future as a regional music hub.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
1	**Strong government support through Vision 2030 cultural initiatives**	**A limited number of professional recording studios**
2	**High-profile festivals like MDLBEAST are attracting global acts**	**Lack of established artist management and booking agencies**
3	**Growing pool of talented local artists across genres**	**Inconsistent live music regulations and licensing processes**
4	**Youth-driven demand for diverse music experiences**	**Limited access to formal music education programs**

5	**Integration of traditional Khaleeji music with modern styles**	**Small independent venue scene compared to global cities**
	Opportunities	**Threats**
1	**Expansion of music tourism through mega-events**	**Economic fluctuations affecting event budgets**
2	**Development of music education and training centers**	**Cultural pushback from conservative segments**
3	**Collaboration between local and international artists**	**Oversaturation of commercial events at the expense of grassroots**
4	**Growth of streaming and digital distribution platforms**	**Reliance on a few major organizers limits diversity**
5	**Corporate sponsorships and brand partnerships in music**	**Global competition for top talent and festival lineups**

Riyadh's music ecosystem is in a period of rapid growth, driven by cultural reforms, a young and engaged population, and increasing global attention. However, it faces challenges in infrastructure, industry maturity, and accessibility.

The following SWOT analysis highlights the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, providing a clear view of the factors that will shape its future as a regional music hub.

5. Recommendations - Solutions & Strategies

5a) Music Tourism Strategy as a Catalyst

	Size	**Trend**	**Affinity**	**Competitive Rivalry**	**Customer Acquisition Cost**	**Profitability**
Segment 1: Regional	Large	High	High	Medium	Low to Medium	High

Youth Travelers (GCC)						
Segment 2: International Cultural Tourists (Europe/Asia)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium to High	Medium	High
Segment 3: Festival-Goers & Music Tourists	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High

Flagship Product

“Riyadh SoundScape” – a multi-day music festival that showcases the city’s cultural diversity, youth creativity, and musical ambition. This flagship event blends modern genres like electronic, hip-hop, and indie with traditional Saudi music, offering performances across both heritage sites and contemporary urban spaces. In addition to live shows, the festival will include immersive experiences: music workshops, food pop-ups, art facilities, local fashion showcases, and cultural talks. The aim is to offer more than just entertainment—it’s a full cultural journey that reflects Riyadh’s identity. With seasonal editions, collaboration with international acts, and strong government and private backing, Riyadh SoundScape could become the city's most iconic music tourism offering.

Narrative Identity

Riyadh’s music scene is about blending tradition with transformation. The strategy tells the story of a city once silent in sound, now rising with new voices, beats, and ideas. It is a place where heritage rhythms meet global sounds, where young Saudis are shaping a creative future while respecting their roots. The message is clear: Riyadh is not copying any other city—it’s building its own music identity. Through this lens, visitors experience music not just as entertainment but as a window into a young, ambitious, and expressive culture.

Target Audiences

GCC Youth Travelers (18–35): Adventurous, social, and culturally curious young people from UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar. They’re weekend trippers and eventgoers looking for new music and nightlife experiences.

International Cultural Tourists: Travelers from Europe, the US, and Asia who seek destinations that offer unique, authentic cultural content, especially those interested in emerging global music scenes.

Festival Tourists: Global and regional music lovers who follow events like MDLBEAST, Coachella, or Sónar. They are open to exploring new destinations that offer high-quality, immersive music experiences.

	Stakeholders	Roles
Music	Saudi Music Commission	Curate music content and talent
	Local artists & musicians	Organize live events and workshops
	Event Organizers (e.g. MDLBEAST, XP Music Futures)	Promote local talent and music identity
	Music venues & studios	Provide spaces and production facilities
Tourism	Saudi Tourism Authority	Promote Riyadh as a music destination
	Ministry of Tourism	Integrate music events into tourist packages
	Tour operators and agencies	Support travel logistics and accommodations
	Hospitality sector (hotels, transport, F&B)	Highlight music experiences in tourism campaigns

5b) Other recommendations

- Develop rehearsal rooms, studios, and small venues
- Launch a Music Export Office for global artist exposure
- Establish music business education programs
- Introduce a Nighttime Economy policy & dedicated office
- Create a central music hub for artists and industry professionals
- Host artist residencies and cultural exchange programs
- Incentivize private sector support (brands, hotels, venues)
- Promote music in public spaces (metro, malls, parks)
- Encourage research & data collection to shape policy

Music City Snapshot

SAUDI MUSIC CITIES EXCHANGE
SMCE

Taif

CONTENT:

- ***Music Identity***
- ***Key Stakeholders***
- ***Stakeholder Presence Checklist***
- ***Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis***
- ***Recommendations – Solutions & Strategies***

1. Music Identity

Genres & Styles:

- Mostly traditional and highlighting Saudi culture to attract local and international cultural tourism
- Genres: orchestral classical, traditional Saudi folk (majrour, samri, Ta'sheera), sung poetry, hip-hop, alternative.
    - Samri: A folk music-and-dance style from the Arabian Peninsula involving poetry sung to daf drums, with seated swaying and clapping—popular at celebratory outdoor gatherings
    - Ardah: Although more common in Najd, Taif hosts regional versions of the traditional male sword/cane dance with drums and poetry at national festivals
    - Ta'sheera: A Taif-based traditional dance noted on social media as uniquely local to the region, often performed in southwest Saudi celebrations

Cultural & Historical Influences:

Taif's local music is shaped by a strong heritage of poetry, traditional dance, and regional customs. Folk styles like Samri, Majrour, and Ta'sheera reflect centuries-old traditions of sung poetry, drumming, and celebratory performance. Ta'sheera, in particular, is unique to Taif and highlights the city's distinct cultural identity.

Poetry remains a key influence, reinforced by institutions like the Arab Poetry Academy. Historically, Taif's tribal and mountainous setting also contributed to unique musical expressions.

Today, Vision 2030 and government support play a major role in preserving and promoting this heritage. Festivals like Taif Season and the Rose Village Festival showcase traditional music alongside orchestral and contemporary styles, positioning Taif as a cultural tourism hub.

Audience Engagement:

Audiences in Taif engage with live music mainly through government-organized festivals like Taif Season and the Rose Village Festival, which feature traditional performances, orchestras, and cultural shows. Public events and outdoor stages draw families and tourists, while nightlife and grassroots venues remain limited. Engagement is largely tied to seasonal, curated cultural programming.

2. Key Stakeholders

Taif's music ecosystem is shaped by a range of stakeholders working within a Vision 2030 framework. Traditional and contemporary artists perform at major venues like King Abdullah

Theater and the Folk Theater of Qia. Government bodies such as the General Entertainment Authority and the Ministry of Culture fund festivals like Taif Season and the Rose Village Festival, promoting cultural tourism. Education is supported by institutions like the Nahawand Center and Arab Poetry Academy, while social media helps spotlight local styles like *Ta'sheera*. The scene is largely driven by public sector initiatives, with limited grassroots or private industry presence.

Stakeholder Type	Local Examples
Artists	Performers of traditional Saudi genres like *Samri*, *Majrour*, *Ta'sheera*, and sung poetry; also hip-hop and alternative artists featured in government festivals.
Venues	King Abdullah Theater, Folk Theater of Qia
Music Businesses	Government entities, Event organizers and cultural consultants like Mashaal Al-Rashid (Rose Village Festival curator)
Public Sector	General Entertainment Authority, Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, Ministry of Culture.
Education	Nahawand Center, Arab Poetry Academy.
Tourism	Taif Season, Rose Village Festival, Tulip Festival, Taif Rose Festival—all promote cultural tourism through music and performance.
Media	Social media plays a key role in promoting local styles like *Ta'sheera* and festival coverage.
Etc…	Cultural donors and Vision 2030 initiatives; top-down support rather than grassroots music development.

Government Support:

Policy plays a central role in shaping Taif's music scene, with government-led initiatives providing most of the infrastructure, funding, and visibility. Under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, music and cultural activities are promoted as part of broader goals for national development and tourism. In Taif, this has resulted in a top-down model where cultural expression—particularly music—is curated and supported through official channels rather than grassroots movements.

Permits for performances and events are typically regulated by national bodies such as the General Entertainment Authority (GEA), which oversees licensing and ensures events align with national cultural values and guidelines. These regulatory processes ensure that performances—particularly in public festivals—meet quality, safety, and content standards.

While this offers structure and legitimacy, it also means artists and organizers must work within formal frameworks to access performance opportunities.

Government grants and sponsorships are critical for music events in Taif. The GEA and the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage are major funders of key events like Taif Season, which features orchestras, traditional music, and dance performances. These festivals are central to cultural engagement in the city and are fully enabled by public funding and permissions.

In terms of infrastructure, local theaters like King Abdullah Theater and the Folk Theater of Qia have been developed or supported by public cultural policies. Similarly, education is institutionalized through the Nahawand Center, an internationally partnered music academy, and the Arab Poetry Academy, both of which are government-supported initiatives that influence the music landscape by formalizing training and preserving cultural traditions.

While this system brings high production value and national attention, it also limits independent or underground scenes from organically developing. Most music activity is curated through state-backed platforms, meaning fewer opportunities for independent event organizers or emerging artists outside the official system. However, the clear support from cultural bodies also provides stability and visibility for traditional music, positioning Taif as a key site for cultural tourism and heritage preservation through performance arts.

Business Engagement:

There is limited evidence of active involvement from local private businesses in sponsoring or promoting music in Taif. The music scene is primarily driven by public sector institutions and Vision 2030-backed initiatives. However, a few examples suggest some level of private involvement, particularly in festival curation and tourism.

One notable example is Mashaal Al-Rashid, a curator of the Rose Village Festival, who specializes in creating visual-musical spectacles. While the festival itself is supported by public bodies, her role indicates private individuals contributing creatively to music promotion and event design.

In the tourism and events space, local hospitality or event management businesses may collaborate with government bodies to host performances during festivals like Taif Season, though these partnerships are generally coordinated under public sponsorship frameworks rather than independent commercial sponsorships.

Overall, while there may be indirect involvement from local businesses through service provision or event partnerships, music in Taif remains largely a government-driven sector with minimal visible sponsorship or hosting from independent local businesses

3. Stakeholder Presence Checklist

Key:

Green tick mark ✅ – The city has a *thriving presence* of these stakeholders; no immediate action is needed.
Upward arrow ⬆️ – The city has *some presence*, but could *benefit from more* of these stakeholders.
Red cross ❌ – These stakeholders are *missing or severely underrepresented* in the city.

Stakeholder Group	Status	Notes
Music Creation		
Artists & Musicians	⬆️	Tariq Abdul Hakim (1919-2012), Talal Maddah (1940-2000), stands out as the most emblematic historic figure born in Taif,
Song-writers & Composers	⬆️	few—likely under 20
Recording Producers	⬆️	Active recording producers in Taif number under 10
Recording Studios	⬆️	likely fewer than 5 semi-professional studios
Rehearsal Rooms	❌	there ‘s no info regarding rehearsal rooms online
Mixing & Mastering	⬆️	Not much info online - but likely fewer than 5
Rights & Distribution		
Record Labels	❌	There are no prominent or well-publicized record labels based in Taif
Publishers	❌	Not much info online
Managers	❌	Not much info online
Music Retail		
Record Shops	❌	Not much info online
Instrument Shops/Makers	⬆️	Not much info online - but likely fewer than 3

Sheet Music Shops	❌	Not much info online
Live Performance		
Large Music Venues	❌	No dedicated large music venues
Midsized Music Venues	⬆️	Few, these venues provide local artists a stage for performances but are not primarily designed as concert halls.
Small Music Venues	⬆️	Several small-scale venues such as cafes, lounges, and cultural centers offer platforms
Theatre	❌	No dedicated theatre facility for large theatrical productions
Promoters/Bookers		
In-House Promoters	❌	There are no widely publicized or formal companies strictly identified as in-house promoters or independent promoters headquartered in Taif
Independent Promoters	❌	
Bookers	❌	
Music Tourism		
Festivals	⬆️	Likely less than 5 festivals emphasize traditional music, poetry, crafts, and folklore,
Museums	⬆️	The Taif Rose Museum and cultural centers often feature local exhibits relating to the city's unique floral heritage and traditional crafts.
Tourism Board/ Cultural Office	⬆️	primarily represented by the Taif Development Authority
Promotion		
Media	⬆️	Taif participates in Saudi Arabia's national media ecosystem, with growing local cultural coverage.
Press	⬆️	Okaz Newspaper stands out as the historic and significant press connection to Taif.
Radio	⬆️	Local radio is embedded in regional broadcasting with no major exclusive Taif radio stations publicly noted.
Visual Creation		

Video Production	⬆️	There are video production companies and studios that offer corporate videos, event coverage, marketing content, film production, and professional photography services.
Photography		
Merchandise		
Merchandise Makers	⬆️	There are no widely documented large-scale merchandise facilities in Taif; most merchandise is artisanal or retail-focused.
Merchandise Sellers		
Governance		
Music Office/ Night Office	⬆️	Taif's music infrastructure centers on educational institutions like the Nahawand Center and government cultural/tourism bodies rather than on distinct offices or trade associations focused on music export or industry regulation locally
Music Export Office	⬆️	
Trade Bodies/ Associations	⬆️	
Music/Industry Education		
Music Schools	⬆️	Nahawand center and Taif University also provide elective cultural and music-related activities, complementing the music education environment in the city.
Youth Ensembles/ Orchestras		
Music Business Courses		
Other programmes/ Training	❌	not much info online
Performance Groups		
Choirs/Ensembles/ Orchestras	⬆️	Formal choirs, orchestras, and music performance societies or clubs are still developing with no major established groups publicly documented yet.
Societies/Associations	⬆️	Music societies and clubs are mostly informal or educationally based rather than independent formal organizations.
Clubs/Groups		

4. Music Ecosystem SWOT Analysis

Taif, a historic city renowned for its rich cultural heritage and traditional significance in Saudi Arabia, stands at a crossroads of opportunity in the realm of music and cultural development. That said, Taifs strengths could also be seen as challenges if any music initiative is threatening the sanctity of this historic place.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
1	- Moderate and enjoyable weather throughout the year even in the summer (unlike other regions in Riyadh)	- Not considered a tourist attraction to the new gen + Lack of awareness of music as a mover and growth parameter for society -
2	- Cultural identity - focus on tradition and heritage (not trying to be a copy and paste - sticking to its identity)	- No current attractive music events take place in Taif making it
3	- Location and proximity to cities in Saudi and the region Airport is well connected - Car access from other Saudi cities is easy	- No education of different and diverse music genres (Traditional song and dance maybe not seen as music - rather seen as tradition - could be a challenge)
4	- Established interest from larger institutions to invest in Taif and build it (It has Nahwand and Arabic poetry academy - which means there is a presence and an interest from the larger institutions and investors to invest in the local)	- Acceptance to more genres of music - could be questioned (proximity to mecca introduces layer of sensitivity
5	- Population of 500K meaning there are enough people to activate/participate in an ecosystem	- Local communities not yet activated or present (could be super underground, but from our initial research nothing was obvious) - you really might have to start from scratch
	Opportunities	**Threats**

1	- To develop and strengthen on musical genres that are relevant to local communities and that can be an opportunity	- Backlash from local communities - Cultural change to take time or for local culture to be resistant and to be reactive towards any musical reformation (people are not open)

2	- Break out for fusion genres starting from heritage genres	- Targeted audience not in Taif rather outside of Taif - which means risk on investment on concerts and any activities is higher - because we cannot rely on local scene
		  - Many experiments will need to be done to understand how the reaction and attendance is
		  - People are required to travel in - you have to spend more time and money to build awareness campaigns and education

3	- Easy to attract residents from close cities - Accessible location - Taif is close in proximity to other cities which be
	  - This can bring new genres, cultures and create diversity so it can help in opening up and educating
	  - Word of mouth / gorilla promotion and education - it will happen organically
		- Gender presence at any of the events could be an issue

4	- Rely on local activations like the Taif and rose festivals as a platform to experiment and gauge audience target groups	
5		

Taif presents a compelling opportunity to develop into a music destination, leveraging its strong cultural identity, year-round favorable weather, and 550K population base. The city benefits from institutional interest and investment potential, with a strength of proximity to other cities for audience diversification. Significant challenges exist including limited music

awareness, lack of diverse genre education, and potential cultural resistance due to proximity to Mecca. The music scene is virtually non-existent or at least seems so from online research, requiring ground-up development. Success depends on building from traditional heritage genres, utilizing existing festivals like the Rose Festival as testing platforms, and carefully managing cultural sensitivities while gradually introducing musical diversity.

5. Recommendations - Solutions & Strategies

5a) Music Tourism Strategy as a Catalyst

Define your target using this criteria:

Segment	Size	Trend	Affinity	Competitive Rivalry	Customer Acquisition Cost	Profitability
1	Saudi Young adults -	13MM in Saudi (of which we know 500K+ go to SS)	looking for a good time (Fomo segment)	High within Saudi MDLBEAST events	Low	High given segment appetite and size
2	Working adults - Locals	4.7-7.1 million	Arabic music enthusiasts	Med within Saudi with Riyadh & Jed. Season	Low-Med	High given segment size and spending power
3	Working adults -(Arab and expats)	Working Adults: 9.8-13.8 million people	modern/english music enthusiasts	Low within Saudi - highers in UAE and Lebanon	Low-Med	Med - given segment size, spending power could be less
4	Parents/older gen -	5.9-8.3 million	classic/arabic music enthusiasts	Low in Taif	Low-Med	Med - given segment size, spending power could be less

Define your positions using this criteria:

	Important	Distinctive	Superior	Communicable	Not Easily Copied
Summer Music Hub	Unmatched weather	Beautiful landscapes and cheaper than other saudi cities	Moderate climate during hottest days of the year Breezy summer	Excellent landscape Outdoor experiences available Local produce is known in all of Saudi Beautiful Nature	Moderate climate during hottest days of the year Breezy summer Excellent landscape Outdoor experiences available
Rose Season (like Sakura)	Outdoor experience, cultural relevance because of smell				No other city in the region offers this Local produce is known in all of Saudi Beautiful Nature
Sub-culture music escape		Beautiful landscapes and cheaper than other saudi cities	Moderate climate during hottest days of the year Breezy summer	Great place to get inspiration Moderate climate during hottest days of the year Breezy summer	

Strategic Conclusions:

A musical festival / experience similar to Monteroux jazz or Balad beast festival but with the focus being Arabic and other folk musical genres stemming from the region. The idea would be to develop a unique product that's not found in the other largest cities in Saudi (JED & RUH) so as to position it with a lot more appeal for the music community and the halo community. The festival will be an improvement/optimization to the existing TAIF festival but where the musical genres are more developed to cater to music enthusiasts, artists and families alike. In a way this would be what New Orleans has to offer but with a Saudi first, Arab flavor.

In order to establish Taif as a musical city and put it on the map we need to use the festival as it offers an experience that is not focused on the entertainment only, but rather on preserving cultural heritage, and using it as an opportunity to develop it further. This might even prevent the risk of offending religious beliefs that might pose a risk on TAIF pursuing this path.

Having such a festival will promote TAIF as a music hub, not as an entertainment hub, rather a city with beautiful nature, great local produce, roses, and excellent climate that make it a place of great inspiration. Once the city positions itself like that it can easily attract local and regional artists to do summer residencies, spend time to gather inspo and collaborate with artists, musicians that are there to do the same.

To accomplish this strategy, there needs to be a collaboration between music and tourism organisations.

	Stakeholders	Roles
Music	Artists & musicians	Use TAIF as a place of inspiration/ develop a scene that caters to creating music and discovering music
	Producers & Studios	Invest in tech and local studio quality
	MDLBEAST	Associate with a key player
Tourism	MOC	Institution to support in investment
	Saudi Tourism	Institution to support in tourism
	MDLBEAST	Associate with a key player

5b) Other recommendations *(under 500 words)*

- Encourage local and MENA F&B to operate within TAIF so it can be an accessible city and caters many tastes
- Investing in the marketing of Taif, but at the same time it feels like it would be great if its more of a place that's the best kept secret so working on a lot of strategic content creation and build a strong network of artists and musicians
- Work with larger institutions to facilitate investments and support in creating an economic and business ecosystem that is lucrative for people to come