

INTRO

[Soundclip: Crowd cheering]

DAWN ATTRIDE: Imagine the last concert you attended. You probably remember screaming your favorite songs at the top of your lungs or fangirling over your idol performing on stage. You might not recall the trash and bottles flung across the ground or the sheer amount of travel it took to get 50,000 screaming fans to the one arena. The live music industry produces [540,000 tons](#) of greenhouse gas emissions each year, which is about the same as the annual emissions of [60,000 households](#). And a weekend-long music festival can consume up to 30,000 megawatts of electricity. That's about the [energy usage of a small city](#).

Music: [Highride Chrome by Blue Dot Sessions](https://app.sessions.blue/browse/track/235151)

DAWN ATTRIDE: Although there have been company-based music sustainability initiatives popping up, it's rare that a band drives the decision to go green. Coldplay's [Music of the Spheres](#) tour is their most sustainable yet; down 50% carbon dioxide emissions from their previous 2016 tour.

DAWN ATTRIDE: My name is Dawn Attride, and in this podcast, we'll be speaking with [Chris Kansy](#) — Coldplay's tour manager — who has had the adventure of a lifetime. Chris has over 30 years of experience in the world of touring; a career long enough to learn just how important sustainability is to global touring.

KANSY BACKGROUND & COLDPLAY WORK

CHRIS KANSY: It all started with me befriending a local band and then I started meeting touring people and before you know it, I was on the road. I've been doing this for so long, you know, I've been on the road since, you know, when I took that job with that local band, I was 18 years old.

DAWN ATTRIDE: Kansy spoke to me about how sustainability became a central conversation in this tour.

CHRIS KANSY: So a lot of the things we do on Coldplay, basically harnesses power to go into batteries. This is entirely band driven, this is an objective of theirs that they felt was very important. You know, they've been very vocal about it in the media. Chris Martin has.

CHRIS KANSY: For decades it was all about, you know it was generators. You know you have big generators and you fill them up with diesel and your feeder cable comes out of those and goes to the stage and that's how you power your show. As far as I know, Coldplay are the first artist ever to do an entire show running batteries.

THE TOUR'S ENERGY DANCE FLOORS & SUSTAINABILITY

Music: He Has a Way by <https://app.sessions.blue/browse/track/235131>>Blue Dot Sessions]

DAWN ATTRIDE: But that's not the only way to power the show. Fans can jump up and down on [dancefloors or cycle on stationary bikes](#) to generate electricity. The dance floors consist of a top layer of tiles made from recycled materials, and when you jump [soundclip of EnergyFloors™] that kinetic energy is transferred to a power grid under the surface.

DAWN ATTRIDE: Here's Kansy to tell us more.

CHRIS KANSY: And believe me, there's not a second someone's not on those bikes. Those energy floors are rammed, constantly. It's a participation thing and I think the audience really digs it! What we do is we take these batteries and we power the underworld. I mean if you were to see the stage, underneath the stage is a village!

DAWN ATTRIDE: Aswell as this, when flying, the tour used sustainable aviation fuel produced entirely from waste such as used restaurant cooking oil. They also used recycled materials to make band merchandise and eliminated single use plastic at the shows.

Music: <https://app.sessions.blue/browse/track/180593>

GREENER FESTIVALS & THE GREEN ECONOMY: CLAIRE O'NEILL

DAWN ATTRIDE: Coldplay are by no means the first to do a large scale sustainability project like this. 20 years ago, [Claire O'Neill](#) set up [A Greener Future](#) in the hopes of tackling festival emissions. And although she's seen progress in industry-led sustainability, there's still a long way to go.

CLAIRE O NEILL: And that's where it's really helpful having higher profile advocates for change. For example, if Coldplay say their intention to make a green tour, the amount of activity that then happens in the supply chain is quite remarkable, you know, so solutions start to be made because people are willing to invest into it. It's the same for events that are really high scale, such as you know, the size of Glastonbury or Coachella, for example, like the big ones, then it sends a message to all of their suppliers that we want the green solutions.

DAWN ATTRIDE: O'Neill sees these green festivals as not only a hub of sustainability, but also as a larger global transition to the green economy.

CLAIRE O NEILL: And I could have just gone to work in sustainability, but saw the opportunity through festivals that people are in a very different state of mind, or they're open to new ideas. But you've also got the chance to build from scratch. And it's a very innovative place. So you can

make entirely different energy systems or water systems, or ways that crowds move or interact. And you've got this communication opportunity as well. So, there's not a huge amount happening in some parts of the sector that need to be improved upon. But where it is happening it's like a beacon to the others that this is where the future is, actually.

CLAIRE O NEILL: And one step even beyond that, on an international level, we have to transition to a green economy in order to survive, basically. And in order to do that, we need to find new ways of doing things. So it's not only something that the industry needs to do to survive, but it's also a responsibility to use that platform for a purpose. And of the greatest purposes at the moment is to facilitate that green transition.

PROFITS & VALIDITY OF SUSTAINABLE EFFORTS

DAWN ATTRIDE: Despite all this, Kansy says the industry still has a long way to go to be totally green and also generate a profit while on tour.

CHRIS KANSY: You have to do a certain amount of shows per week to be able to pay for all that and turn a profit because at the end of the day, that's what this is all about — making a profit. So we do what we can do. And just monitoring how much diesel you are burning and trying to make sure that what you're doing is efficient.

DAWN ATTRIDE: In the meantime, to account for emissions produced on tour, Coldplay donates 10% of their earnings to carbon capture and renewable energy projects like [The Ocean Cleanup](#) and [Sustainable Food Trust](#).

DAWN ATTRIDE: I checked in with [Dr. John Fernandez](#), director of the [Environmental Solutions Initiative](#) at MIT, an organization that acts as a scientific advisor to high greenhouse gas emitters like the music industry.

JOHN FERNANDEZ: So we have a project that's been founded by Warner, Live Nation, and Coldplay. We're doing a comprehensive greenhouse gas assessment of live music in the US and UK. This is a research project which means we are going to be producing a report that will be released to the public. The target for release of that report is July of this year.

DAWN ATTRIDE: Dr. Fernandez assessed the emissions data from the first 12 months of Coldplay's tour.

JOHN FERNANDEZ: When you're trying to assess the greenhouse gas emissions of any component of the music industry, you're dealing with a great variety of data sets, many of which are incomplete. And in live music, I think I can say for the most part that you are in a data scarce environment.

JOHN FERNANDEZ: So my process in assessing was to verify that they had used the methods that I would have used, that they had used the carbon coefficients that were appropriate to the tour location. And to get a sense of the veracity of the conclusions based on the variable data that was available. So, I did have access to all the data sets. On the one hand, any tour has perfect data on attendance and ticket sales, right, they have to. And they had very imperfect data, very incomplete data on things like transport of the band members themselves. Some good data on power, but also some missing depending on the venue.

JOHN FERNANDEZ: And my assessment at the end of the day also suggested that, well, this is just the, this is just the next step, it's not perfect, but it's a very good positive step in the right direction.

OUTRO: FUTURE OF INDUSTRY

DAWN ATTRIDE: And for Kansy, life on the road is far from over and he keeps striving to push the boundaries of sustainable touring, no matter how small the steps may be.

CHRIS KANSY: All my shows now whether you know I started it, you know with Tool and Roger Waters and now Coldplay, you know, no plastic bottles, no plastic bottles. There's a lot of things we can do, you know there's food waste. People are paying attention and I think they're going to have to. It is our duty as individuals in this industry, who represent this industry, to make it better.

DAWN ATTRIDE: Scoring from Blue dot sessions. A special thanks to Chris Kansy, Claire O'Neill, and John Fernandez for speaking on this podcast.