

Hi there,

You may be reading this document because you're making a podcast and you want to know how to pay for it, or because you're considering becoming a patron of Long Cat, or simply because you're curious. Or maybe you're my mother and you're worried I don't make enough money. All of this is valid. I guess.

Take everything I say in the knowledge that it won't be for everyone. This is only an overview; it's not intended to reflect other people's experiences; nor is it a 'how to'. However, it might be helpful to someone. And at the very least, we want to be transparent, because only shady bastards have opaque business practices.

INTRODUCTION

To make audio fiction, we rely on revenue from three areas: the Arts Council, listener patronage through Ko-Fi, and advertising/sponsorship. We also sell merchandise but that's mainly for our own gratification as we don't earn very much from that. Enough to keep the cats in Dreamies, at least (Dreamies are cat crack, if you didn't already know.) (This document is not sponsored by Dreamies.).

First of all, lets talk about costs.

COSTS

Our biggest expense is the Long Cat employees, which includes Lindsay (hello!), Laurence, and our cast.

Laurence and I wear a lot of hats, including writer, director, actor, editor, sound engineer, sound designer, composer, administrator, fundraiser, and graphic designer. That list looks ridiculous, but we do enjoy putting our sticky fingers on every aspect of our projects. However, we hope to be able to pay someone else to do the dialogue editing and admin one day, as that would ease our load considerably.

For Laurence and I, fulfilling our roles constitutes a full work-week - around 30 hours for me*, and between 40 and 60 hours for Laurence - and as this precludes other work (except for the occasional freelance gig), we need to be paid for the work we do in order to live.

Other expenses include: actors, sound libraries, instruments, microphones, and all the other things it takes to run a small at-home studio.

So how do we pay for our actors, ourselves, and the studio?

(*If you count the hours I spend percolating ideas, then I actually work 100 hours a week. Including when I sleep.)

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

ACE project grants part-fund almost all our shows (and the rest of the production costs are paid by advertising and listener patronage. More on that later).

Arts Council grants are in no way guaranteed. There's a lot of competition. I apply for a grant each time we have a new project, and in the application form I have to detail the budget breakdown, the production timeline, why and how we'll make the show, and quite a lot of other stuff too. If you're applying for an ACE grant and you're struggling with the form, I'm happy to give advice. However, as filling in the form is a lengthy process, and as I am a money-hungry maniac with dollar signs for eyes, I have started to charge a consultancy fee (although I'm happy to do consultancy work pro bono too. Email me if you want to ask about that. My email is info@longcatmedia.com and my consultancy fees are here – <https://ko-fi.com/longcatmedia/commissions>)

A great thing about the Arts Council is that they want everyone to be paid fairly. You are not allowed to pay someone in biscuits and hugs for a whole day's work (which is the sort of thing that happens in the arts all the time; a state of affairs that is both normalised and *not good at all*). So, for instance, I asked the actors union Equity what a reasonable fee might be for acting in audio fiction (as there's no consensus yet across the industry) and that's what we pay. Having been underpaid actors ourselves in the past, it feels very nice to pay people properly. And if *we* can pay our creatives a fair wage, I don't know wtf the big companies are playing at. Here's to robust collective action and strong unions.

Anyway. Ahem. Enough of that. (Seize the means of production, comrades).

Generally, the Arts Council will not give anyone a grant unless they can find at least 10% of their production budget elsewhere. Some say it's better to have higher than 10% as then you're more likely to be awarded the grant. So if a podcast costs £33K (which is what we've found to be the average cost of a ten episode season with a cast of between 8 and 12, where everyone is paid a fair wage), then you have to find £3300 to put towards the production before you apply for a grant, or preferably more.

So where does this money come from? Patronage and advertising!

LISTENER PATRONAGE

Patrons of the arts; the good people responsible for Shakespeare, the Renaissance, and Mockery Manor. Imagine a world without those who helped feed and clothe artists while they chipped away at marble, wrote sonnets, and birthed the phrase 'Trousers Meowsers'?

(This is a silly document. Sorry if you clicked on it in the expectation of professionalism.)

So, we set up a 'Ko-Fi' account because Ko-Fi don't take a percentage of earnings (unlike Patreon, who take between 5% and 12% plus a hefty processing fee). Instead, Ko-Fi charges a very reasonable set monthly fee. It's a great scheme for creatives. We recommend it.

On our Ko-Fi page, listeners can give a one-off payment (the idea being, 'buy us a coffee' if you like our work) or you can contribute monthly to support future work and receive special benefits. To see the benefits that monthly contributors receive, see here - <https://ko-fi.com/longcatmedia/tiers>

We also have merchandise for sale on our Ko-Fi page - <https://ko-fi.com/longcatmedia/shop>

Without listener contributions, we would not be able to apply for Arts Council grants. We would not be able to make podcasts full stop. So thank you so much to those who either give us one-off payments or contribute monthly.

ADVERTISING / SPONSORSHIPS

The more listeners you have, the more advertising / sponsorship money you can earn. That's why Joe Rogan is a millionaire and we rely on grants hahahaha **weeps**.

No, OK, here's the thing: audio fiction is on the rise, but at the moment its audiences are a fraction of what the big chat podcasts get. But if Long Cat audience numbers continue to rise at the current rate, we won't have to rely on grants forever. By my reckoning (a very casual reckoning, written on the back of a beer mat), if our audience continues to grow at the current rate, we will be able to pay for our podcasts with advertising money by 2027. We just need to survive until then (*looks around at the state of the world, feels a bead of sweat drip into eye*)

So how do adverts work? Well, some adverts are simply 'flighted' onto our episodes without any effort on our part. We've set filters so that certain types of advert are never played and our values are not compromised. Although a Tucker Carlson advert snuck through once, which was *not good*. Please tell us if you hear anything dubious on our feed!

Another type is when a company wants us to make and deliver the advert. This takes some time. I write a wee script, we record it, and then it plays on our episodes. For both these types, we get a flat fee.

And then there's the type where we don't get paid for the advert, but we do get commission on sales. For instance, when someone buys a Shaker and Spoon cocktail hamper using our code (<https://shakerandspoon.com/mockerymanor>), you get \$20 off and we get a percentage of the sale. And it's also worth noting that for this type of deal, the company sends us a sample so we can check we like it. So we get FREE STUFF occasionally, which is exciting and feels like Christmas. And that, my friend, is why we're in showbiz.

ASK ME QUESTIONS

The best place to ask questions about this is probably on our Ko-Fi page! (See how I'm nudging you towards being a patron? That's because I am a ruthless CEO type with cash registers ringing in my ears.)

But yeah, I'm happy to answer questions on this, especially if you're trying to set up your own podcast and there's something specific you'd like to know. Sharing is caring, and caring is how you attract Care Bears (and my life's mission is to trap one of the little bastards).

OK I'm going now.

Lindsay x