# The 1975 faces lawsuit after ‘gay’ kiss in Malaysia



British pop-rock band The 1975 is facing a lawsuit from the organisers of Malaysia’s Good Vibes Festival following actions by lead singer Matty Healy during their performance last July. The organisers, Future Sound Asia (FSA), are seeking $2.4 million (£1.9 million), contending that the band’s violation of the festival’s conduct code resulted in the festival’s abrupt cancellation.

The court documents filed in the UK High Court and initially reported by Variety outline the sequence of events leading up to the lawsuit. The FSA alleges that The 1975 and their management team were fully informed about Malaysia’s stringent performance restrictions, including rules against swearing, smoking, drinking alcohol on stage, removing clothes, and discussing politics or religion. Notably, the Malaysia Central Agency for the Application for Foreign Filming and Performance by Foreign Artistes (PUSPAL) also prohibits “kissing, kissing a member of the audience or carrying out such actions among themselves” during performances.

According to the suit, The 1975 had previously performed at the festival in 2016 under similar restrictions. Initially, their 2023 application to perform was rejected due to concerns about Healy’s past drug addiction. However, after an appeal and a commitment from the band to adhere to all local guidelines, PUSPAL granted approval for their performance.

Nevertheless, on the night before the scheduled performance, the band reportedly reconsidered and then decided to go ahead with a different setlist and a plan to intentionally breach the guidelines. The performance included Healy making a “provocative speech” against Malaysia’s anti-LGBTQ+ laws and sharing a “long pretend passionate embrace” with bassist Ross MacDonald. These actions, along with Healy allegedly consuming alcohol, smoking, and behaving incoherently on stage, led to the abrupt interruption of their set by festival officials.

The FSA claims that after the on-stage kiss, PUSPAL ordered The 1975 to halt their performance, during which Healy responded aggressively, necessitating intervention from his managers. Following this incident, the Malaysian government revoked the festival’s license, leading to the cancellation of the event's final two days which included performances by local and international artists such as The Strokes.

In the aftermath, the FSA accused The 1975 of contract breach, demanding $2 million in damages as the cancellation had severe repercussions on local artists and small businesses reliant on the festival. They further stressed that the band's actions violated the pre-agreed terms of their $350,000 contract to perform, resulting in significant financial and reputational damages.

Healy later defended his actions, claiming that the kiss was a standard part of their stage show and challenging the idea that artists should conform to local cultural sensibilities. He stated, “Me kissing Ross was not a stunt simply meant to provoke the government... The idea that it’s incumbent upon artists to cater to the local cultural sensitivities of wherever they’ve been invited to perform sets a very dangerous precedent.”

The controversy surrounding The 1975’s conduct has led to further repercussions, with Malaysian Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil labeling the act as “extremely rude” and ensuring that the band would not be allowed to perform in Malaysia again.

Following the event’s cancellation, The 1975 also called off subsequent tour dates in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Taipei, Taiwan. As legal proceedings continue, representatives for The 1975 have not yet offered additional comments on the lawsuit.