

When the visa does not arrive

US work visas and late show cancellations: what event professionals should plan for. Full report

Operational **Tactical** **Strategic**

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Applies to	Event professionals working at events in the United States who need a US work visa. Describes US federal rules
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Read this first. This report is general information for event professionals. It is not legal or immigration advice. US immigration rules, processing times and fees can change without notice. Check the official USCIS and Department of State pages and take advice from a qualified immigration adviser before you plan, book or travel.



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About this report. It expands OTAS Insight TB-002 with how US work visas for performers and crew work, where the timeline can fail, actions for each level, a back-planning template, contract points and a crew briefing script. Section 9 lists what we could not confirm. To ask for this report in another format, use the contact details on the OTAS Insights page.

1 Summary

A show in the United States can be lost if the work visas are not issued in time, even after months of preparation. On 20 October 2026 the organisers of two Los Angeles concerts set for 22 and 23 October cancelled both shows because the US visas needed for the event could not be obtained [1][2]. They said they had worked with lawyers and promoters in the US on the visas for more than six months [1].

For event professionals, the lesson does not depend on why those visas were not approved, which the organisers have not said. US work visas for performers and crew run in two stages: a petition to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), then a visa application at a US embassy or consulate [15]. Either stage can run late. The US Department of State says a petition approval does not guarantee a visa, and that travellers should not make final travel plans or buy tickets until they have one [15].

This report explains the process, where the timeline can fail, and what to do at each level: Operational, Tactical and Strategic. It applies to any event professional performing or working at events in the United States who needs a US work visa, including UK crew. It describes US federal immigration rules as published on 20 October 2026. It is not legal or immigration advice.

At a glance. US work visas for performers and crew need an approved USCIS petition first, then a visa from a US embassy or consulate [15].

- Crew are not covered by the performers' petition. Essential support staff such as lighting and sound technicians need their own petition [9][10].
- For O petitions, USCIS says file no more than 1 year before the work starts and at least 45 days before it, to avoid delays [8].
- Premium processing gives a USCIS action within 15 business days for these petitions, but the clock restarts if USCIS asks for more evidence [12].
- Working on the Visa Waiver Program (ESTA) is not permitted [16].
- Set a firm go or no-go date in the contract, and decide in advance who pays if the visas do not arrive.

2 What happened

On 19 October 2026 at 03:00 UTC (04:00 UK time), the official English website of the Umamusume: Pretty Derby game franchise posted a notice about the Los Angeles concerts of its 7th EVENT WORLD TOUR, planned for 22 and 23 October 2026 [1]. It said the organisers had been "working with lawyers and promoters in the US to secure the visas necessary to enter the US since over six months ago, but as of now the visas have yet to be approved" [1]. The same notice was posted in Japanese and on the franchise's X accounts [3][4]. It said a final decision would be announced by 22:00 on 19 October, Pacific time [1].

On 20 October 2026, a Japanese notice on the franchise's official website, posted at 13:30 Japan time (05:30 UK time), said the Los Angeles shows had been cancelled [2][5]. Our translation of the key sentence: the staff had coordinated with all parties concerned and explored every possible method, but because they could not obtain the US visas needed for the shows, they had made the difficult decision to give them up [2]. The notice apologised for the announcement coming so close to the event. It said refunds were planned for on-site tickets, streaming tickets, an official tour package and live viewing tickets, and that support for people who had planned to attend in person was being considered [2].

The news was reported early by Anime News Network and ORICON NEWS [6][7]. The organisers have not said why the visas were not approved, and EPGN does not speculate. Nothing in this report suggests that anyone involved did anything wrong.

3 How US work visas for performers and crew work

3.1 Two stages: petition, then visa

The Department of State says most applicants for temporary worker visas must have an approved petition, filed by the prospective employer and reviewed by USCIS [15]. Once USCIS approves the petition, it sends a Notice of Action, Form I-797. Only then can each person apply for a visa at a US embassy or consulate [15].

For the visa stage, the Department of State says:

- interviews are generally required, with limited exceptions, and a consular officer may require an interview of any applicant [15];
- you schedule the interview where you live, and it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside your place of permanent residence [15];
- interview wait times vary by location, season and visa category, so you should apply early [15];
- an application may need further administrative processing after the interview [15];
- the visa application fee shown on its page is \$205, and it is non-refundable [15].

The U.S. Embassy in London says nonimmigrant visa applicants should schedule interviews at the embassy or consulate in their country of residence or nationality, and that visa application fees are non-refundable and non-transferable [18]. The FCDO says visa appointments at the US Embassy in London are limited, that you should plan as far ahead as possible, and that you can request an expedited interview through the embassy's appointment service if you need to travel urgently [19].

3.2 The main categories for events

The Department of State lists the O, P-1, P-2 and P-3 categories for artists, entertainers and athletes, each including people who provide essential support [15].

Category	Who it is for	Source
O-1	A person with extraordinary ability in the arts, sciences, education, business or athletics, or extraordinary achievement in film or television	[8]
O-2	A person who accompanies an O-1 artist or athlete to assist in a specific event or performance. The assistance must be an "integral part" of the performance, with critical skills that cannot readily be performed by a US worker	[8]
P-1B	A member of an entertainment group recognised internationally as outstanding. The group must have been established for at least 1 year, and at least 75 percent of members must have been with it for at least 1 year	[9]
P-3	An artist or entertainer coming to perform, teach or coach in a culturally unique programme	[11]
P-1S, P-2S, P-3S	Essential support personnel for P performers, who perform services that cannot be readily performed by a US worker	[10]

Table 1. The O and P categories most often used for live events, as described by USCIS and the Department of State on 20 October 2026.

3.3 Crew need their own petitions

USCIS says the members of a P-1B group are the people actually performing. It does not include people who assist but are not on the stage, "such as lighting or sound technicians". They need to be petitioned for as essential support and a separate petition must be filed for them [10]. USCIS lists front office personnel, camera operators, lighting technicians and stage personnel as examples of P-1 support personnel [9]. For O-2 support staff, USCIS says the O-1 performer and each O-2 must each have their own Form I-129 [8].

For event operations, this means the crew list is part of the visa plan from the start. A performer's approval does not cover the touring crew.

3.4 What the petition needs

For O and P petitions, USCIS asks for evidence that takes time to gather. It includes:

- **a consultation:** a written advisory opinion from a peer group, labour organisation or expert, depending on the category [8][9];
- **contracts:** a copy of the written contract, or a summary of the terms of an oral agreement [8][9];
- **an itinerary:** the dates and locations of the events [8][9];
- **evidence of standing:** for example evidence of international recognition for a P-1B group, or of the support person's critical skills and experience with the performer [8][9].

3.5 Timing rules and premium processing

For O-1 and O-2 petitions, USCIS says the employer or agent cannot file more than 1 year before the services are needed, and should file at least 45 days before the date of employment to avoid delays [8].

USCIS offers premium processing for Form I-129, including the O-1, O-2, P-1, P-1S, P-2, P-2S and P-3 classifications [12]. For a fee, USCIS guarantees to take "adjudicative action" within 15 business days, or refund the premium processing fee [12]. Adjudicative action can be an approval, a denial, a notice of intent to deny or a request for evidence [12]. If USCIS asks for more evidence, the 15-day period stops and a new one starts when the response arrives [12]. Premium processing speeds up the USCIS stage only. It does not cover the embassy interview or visa issuance.

3.6 Paperwork changes this autumn

USCIS changed the mail filing location for Form I-129 on 7 October 2026, with a 30-day grace period for forms postmarked on or before 9 November 2026 [13]. From 9 November 2026, USCIS will accept only the 09/09/26 edition of Form I-129. Earlier editions postmarked or submitted on or after that date will be rejected [13]. USCIS published a new fee schedule edition on 16 October 2026 [14]. Fees change, so check the current schedule before filing.

3.7 The visa integrity fee

US law, 8 U.S.C. 1806, requires a visa integrity fee from any person issued a nonimmigrant visa, at the time of issue [17]. For fiscal year 2025 the amount is the greater of \$250 or an amount set by rule, with annual inflation adjustments after that. The fee cannot be waived or reduced, and the law allows it to be reimbursed later if the visa holder complied with all its conditions [17]. We could not confirm from an official source whether the fee was being collected on 20 October 2026. Check the Department of State's fee pages before budgeting.

3.8 ESTA is not a work permit

UK citizens can usually visit the United States for tourism or business for up to 90 days under the Visa Waiver Program with an ESTA approval [16]. The Department of State lists "employment" as a travel purpose not permitted under the programme [16]. Amateurs may take part in musical events only if they are not paid [16]. The FCDO warns that travelling on an ESTA when ineligible can lead to detention and deportation by the US authorities [19].

3.9 A visa is not a guarantee of entry

The Department of State says a visa allows you to travel to a US port of entry and ask to be admitted, but border officers decide whether to admit you [15]. The FCDO says US authorities enforce entry rules strictly, that a valid ESTA or visa does not guarantee entry, and that officials may ask to inspect electronic devices [19].

4 Where the timeline can fail

Working back from the show date, there are several points where time can run out. None of these is a finding about the Los Angeles cancellation.

Stage	What can slow it	What you can control
Deciding the category	A performer or group may not fit the category first chosen. USCIS gives an example of a group that does not meet the 75 percent rule needing another classification [10]	Get immigration advice early on the right category for every person
Gathering evidence	Consultation letters, contracts, itineraries and evidence of standing all take time [8][9]	Start as soon as dates are agreed. Keep the crew list current
USCIS decision	A request for evidence stops and restarts the premium processing clock [12]	File early. Answer requests quickly and completely
Embassy interview	Appointment wait times vary by place and season [15]. London appointments are limited [19]	Book as soon as the petition is approved. Know the expedite route [19]
Administrative processing	Some applications need further processing after the interview [15]	Build a buffer into the plan. Do not book final travel before visas are issued [15]
Entry	Border officers decide on admission [15][19]	Carry the right documents. Brief everyone on what the visa allows

Table 2. Points of delay in the US work visa process, from the official sources listed.

5 What it means for event professionals

Late visa failures hit everyone in the chain. Performers lose the date. Crew who have cleared their diaries lose the work. Promoters, venues and ticketing teams have to refund and rebook. Audiences may already have travelled.

Three points stand out for event operations:

- **Crew are part of the visa plan.** Lighting, sound, stage and camera crew need their own petitions [9][10]. A late crew petition can stop a show as surely as a late performer petition.



- **The decision date matters as much as the filing date.** In Los Angeles the organisers announced the cancellation less than three days before the first show [1][2]. A go or no-go date agreed in advance gives everyone more notice: crew, venue, ticket holders and travellers.
- **Money follows the contract.** Who pays for travel, crew fees and refunds when visas fail is a contract question. Agree it before anyone books.

6 What to do

Operational

- Do not travel to work in the US on an ESTA. Employment is not permitted under the Visa Waiver Program [16].
- Check your passport. The Department of State asks for a passport valid for at least six months beyond your stay, unless exempt by agreement [15].
- Send personal documents and visa forms to the production team as soon as you are asked.
- Book and attend your visa interview as soon as the petition is approved, at the embassy or consulate in your country of residence or nationality [18].
- Do not book non-refundable personal travel until your visa is issued [15].
- Carry a copy of the petition approval notice and your contract details when you travel. Answer border questions truthfully.

Tactical

- List every person who will work in the US, performers and crew, with their role and the visa category they need.
- Get immigration advice on the right category for each person. Remember that support crew need their own petitions [9][10].
- Build a timeline back from the first show date. Include evidence gathering, the USCIS stage, the embassy interview, administrative processing and a buffer.
- For O petitions, plan to file at least 45 days before the work starts, and no more than 1 year before [8]. Treat 45 days as a minimum, not a target.
- Budget for premium processing where the dates are tight, and remember that a request for evidence restarts the clock [12].
- Track each person's status weekly: evidence, filing, approval, interview, visa issued.
- Hold tickets and accommodation on flexible terms until visas are issued [15].
- Prepare the cancellation or postponement notice in advance, so it can go out quickly if the go or no-go date is missed.

Strategic

- Decide who files the petition and who pays for it, and write it into the contract.
- Agree a go or no-go date in the contract. Set out what happens if visas are not issued by then: cancel, postpone or change the line-up.
- Agree in writing who bears each cost if visas fail: travel, crew fees, venue costs and ticket refunds.
- Check whether your event cancellation or other insurance covers a failure to obtain visas, and get the answer in writing. Do not assume it does.
- Fund the time and specialist advice that the visa process needs. Set the date to start it when the show is confirmed, not when it goes on sale.
- Decide who speaks for the event if a show is at risk, and how quickly ticket holders and crew will be told.

7 Tools

7.1 Back-plan from the show date

The figures in the right-hand column come from USCIS and the Department of State. Everything else is a planning prompt, not an official requirement.

Step	What to do	Official point
Show confirmed	Start the visa plan. Appoint one person to own it	Petition cannot be filed more than 1 year before the work (O) [8]
Crew list fixed	Confirm every person, role and category	Support crew need separate petitions [9][10]
Evidence complete	Consultations, contracts, itinerary, evidence of standing	Required with the petition [8][9]
Petition filed	File with the right edition of Form I-129 and the right fee	File at least 45 days before the work (O) [8]. 09/09/26 edition only from 9 November 2026 [13]
USCIS action	Answer any request for evidence quickly	Premium processing: action within 15 business days, clock restarts on a request for evidence [12]
Interviews booked	Book every person as soon as the approval notice arrives	Receipt number needed to book. Wait times vary [15]
Visas issued	Only now confirm non-refundable travel	Do not make final travel plans until you have a visa [15]
Go or no-go date	Decide, record why, and tell everyone affected	Agreed in your contract

Table 3. Back-planning template. Adapt it with your immigration adviser.

7.2 Contract points to raise

These are points to discuss with your lawyer, not legal drafting.

Point	What to agree
Petitioner	Who files each petition, and who supplies which evidence by when

Point	What to agree
Go or no-go date	The date by which visas must be issued, and who decides
Costs if visas fail	Fees, travel, crew, venue and refunds: who pays what
Crew	That crew petitions are included and managed with the same priority as performers
Insurance	What is covered if visas are not issued, in writing
Communications	Who tells ticket holders, crew and partners, and how fast

Table 4. Contract points for performers, promoters and production companies.

7.3 Briefing script for travelling crew (about 1 minute)

"Before we travel to the US: nobody works on an ESTA. Everyone needs the right visa in their passport before they fly. Bring your passport, a copy of our approval notice and your contract details. At the border, answer questions truthfully and say what you are there to do. Do not book any personal travel you cannot change until your visa is issued. If anything changes with your visa, tell _____ straight away. Any questions?"

8 Frequently asked questions

Can UK crew work at a US event on an ESTA?

No. The Visa Waiver Program, which ESTA supports, does not permit employment [16]. Crew working at an event in the US need the right work visa.

Do crew need their own visa petition?

Yes, in the main categories for performers. USCIS says support staff who are not on stage, such as lighting or sound technicians, need a separate petition as essential support [10]. O-2 support staff each need their own Form I-129 [8].

How early should a US work visa petition be filed?

For O petitions, USCIS says no more than 1 year before the work starts and at least 45 days before it [8]. After that, each person still needs an embassy interview, and wait times vary [15].

Does premium processing guarantee the visa in time?

No. It guarantees that USCIS takes action on the petition within 15 business days, which can be a request for more evidence [12]. It does not cover the embassy interview or visa issue.

What does a US work visa cost?

The Department of State shows a \$205 non-refundable application fee for these visas [15]. USCIS petition and premium processing fees are on its current fee schedule [14]. US law also sets a visa integrity fee of at least \$250, payable when a visa is issued [17]. We could not confirm whether it was being collected on 20 October 2026.

Why were the Los Angeles shows cancelled?

The organisers said the US visas needed for the shows could not be obtained [2]. They have not said why. EPGN does not speculate.



9 What we don't know yet

- **Why these visas were not approved.** The organisers have not said, and this report draws no conclusion about it [1][2].
- **Processing times.** USCIS and embassy timings change through the year. Check the current figures before planning [12][15].
- **The visa integrity fee.** The law is in force [17]. We could not confirm from an official source whether the fee was being collected on 20 October 2026, or how reimbursement will work.
- **Insurance.** Whether a policy covers a failure to obtain visas depends on its wording. We have not reviewed any policies.
- **How common late visa failures are.** We found no official figures on event cancellations caused by visa delays.

10 Sources

All web sources were opened and checked on 20 October 2026. Japanese-language sources were read in full in Japanese. Translations in this report are our own.

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2. Umamusume: Pretty Derby official website (Japanese), notice of cancellation of '7th EVENT "THE STAGE" in LOS ANGELES' (posted 20 October 2026, 13:30 Japan time). Read in full in Japanese. <https://umamusume.jp/news/detail?id=3503>
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11. USCIS, 'P-3 Artist or Entertainer Coming to Be Part of a Culturally Unique Program'. <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/temporary-workers/p-3-artist-or-entertainer-coming-to-be-part-of-a-culturally-unique-program>
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14. USCIS, 'G-1055, Fee Schedule' (edition of 16 October 2026). <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1055>
15. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, 'Temporary Worker Visas'. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/employment/temporary-worker-visas.html>

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18. U.S. Embassy and Consulates in the United Kingdom, 'U.S. Visa Services'. <https://uk.usembassy.gov/visas/>
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11 About this report

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