

So You Want To Make It In The Music Biz?

O.K – so you want to make it in the music business? I'm assuming that you're talented (extraordinarily so) and not just because your mum/grandma/dog think so! You can sing and/or play an instrument (preferably both!) and write a good song. And you feel ready to venture out into the fat cat money men world of the Music Biz.

So now what?

The answer is quite simply this: Get Yourself Out There. Gig. Once you've taken your music from bedroom to smoke filled bar, then you've begun your journey to success! (Or hearing problems and lung disease at the very least!)

The gigging stuff also gives you another essential ingredient in the recipe for success. Fans. You won't get far without them. And building a fan base doesn't happen on its own. It's bloody hard work. You'll need to get peoples email addresses, and keep them informed about your live dates. And while we're on that particular topic – tell EVERYONE about your gigs. Local rags, gig guides, universities, local radio, your mates, your mates mates, people on the street, and so on and so forth...

But do you know who you are? I don't mean your name and where you live (hopefully that's taken as read) but rather – Who Are You Musically? Who are your fans? Are they young, old, students, professionals? If you don't know who they are how can you target them? For example, older dudes are unlikely to see your live dates printed in a gig guide picked up in a rock guitar shop. Know what I'm saying? So find out who they are and get them on side.

Marketing yourself as an independent or unsigned artist is difficult in some areas, great in others. So maybe TV and national radio are a bit of a slippery eel (there *are* still unsigned opportunities) but there's plenty of local TV and Radio stations that will give you airplay and do interviews etc.

As for the press, again it can be tricky, but if you want them to take an interest in you, be imaginative. Think of an angle. Find a story. Did you have a life saving operation when you were 6? Were you ravaged by a crocodile and have rebuilt your life through music? Get the drift?

The internet however, makes the world your oyster. Well – your tuna fish at least. Through a web presence, you can seriously raise your profile. There are lots of sites dedicated to unsigned bands; internet radio stations, labels, promoters – the list is endless. Be on them. All of them.

And then there's your own website. (Essential!) And don't forget peeps, get some sound bites on there. It's no use if people can't hear what you sound like. And make sure any photos match your 'image' too. Fuzzy, out of focus 'performing' shots are fine for rock/grunge bands, but if you're a solo female or male artist, something more polished is advisable. It's a fickle world. Looks DO matter. So create a strong image – whatever that may be.

If you can find them, work with like minded people. It stops you feeling alone and it's the best way to build contacts. You never know, that someone you helped out last week might get signed to Sony tomorrow. What goes round comes round.

This next point might seem blazingly obvious but you'd be surprised. Have a demo. Have a GREAT demo! Badly recorded demos have the A & R guys reaching for the eject button! Yeah I know, you've got no wongas - then record fewer tracks. And don't waste valuable studio time if the tracks are not rehearsed. That would be a very expensive rehearsal. But quality counts.

And the most important ***personal*** quality? Tenacity. With a capital T. Underlined and in bold. You've got to keep going on, and on, and on...no matter what.

The best way to approach your musical career is this. It's a job. O.K. it's more than that. It's your vocation, your raison d'être, I know, I know, but look upon it as a military operation. Plan your campaign, evaluate the plan, execute its engagement and be STRATEGIC! How can you fail?

Before concluding this article, I'd like to remind you of an often overlooked essential to making it in this biz. A support network! You see, in this business only one thing is certain. Rejection. So get used to it. Whether it's the scathing review in the paper, the huuuuge number of unanswered phone calls or playing to two people in your local. (And they're deaf.) Rejection is EVERYWHERE. And it's unavoidable.

And this is where the aforementioned folk re-enter the story. Yes I mean the mum, the grandma, the dog and whoever else is in your camp! Have people around you who believe in you. Who never doubt that you'll 'make it'. This will keep you sane. (Although insanity could have its advantages. I'm thinking of that story for the press again... but I digress.)

Ultimately you need to BELIEVE. Keep your dream alive. When I was young and foolish (oh happy days!) I used to have many dreams. Sell-out tours, number one albums, and my absolute favourite fantasy? That's the one where a music mogul in a black suit comes knocking at my door yielding a million dollar contract and a pen. Mmmm...

OK. So now I'm older, wiser (debatable!), wrinklier. What have I learnt?

I've learnt that it IS all out there. Opportunity that is. And dreams can come true.

But no one EVER comes knocking.

Except the Betterware guy.

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