“Mother” – Anna Aarons

UK single and remix campaign

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1. Introduction

Groups of four students were allocated a theoretical working budget of 5000 and tasked to develop an original artist campaign to include the recording, digital release, and promotion strategy of a single and remix with all its associated media including iconography and artwork, behind-the-scenes content creation, electronic press kit and one-sheet, legal documentation, financial budgeting, and sponsorship.

Wyn Morgan, Anna Cohen and I, formed a group we aptly named “The A Team”, originally there was a fourth member, David Finch, but he withdrew from the MA course shortly after we began to be replaced by another individual, Andre Wallace, who also left the group not long after joining. We decided to use our skillsets and experience to our advantage regarding contributing roles for creating the group material required. Cohen composes her own original material, Morgan has ten years of professional experience working for PRS and I have enjoyed many years working within the entertainment industry in a variety of roles, including but not limited to, producer, composer, mix engineer and record label director gaining experience with the commercial practices of the larger mainstream industry.

2. Artist and repertoire process

Cohen presented the group with three of her original compositions of music, two of which were already available on digital service providers (DSPs) but luckily the third was not. The piece is a minimal, acoustic, soul track called ‘Mother’ which fits perfectly into the Neo-Soul genre, an area of considerable popularity growth seen within the market over the last 10 years, somewhat due to the late Amy Winehouse, but also because of the emergence of incredibly talented, younger, artists such as Olivia Rodrigo, Lady Wray, Jorja Smith, Cleo Soul and Yebba (*Kulture Vultures*, 2022).

Olivia Rodrigo's single "Drivers License" and album "SOUR" were respectfully the highest globally streamed song and album in 2022 (*Spotify*, 2022) which mainly consist of female vocals, guitar/ bass, and piano composition with a minimal percussion accompaniment. This positioned our choice of material perfectly within the same demographic audience and genre as Rodrigo, with 69% in the 13-24 age range (*LSU Media*, 2021).

When commissioning the remix, we chose 'Drum and Bass' as the genre, mainly due to its popularity within the UK (*Jenkins*, 2020) also the wide range of producers available (*Mullins*, 2020), we eventually settled on the highly successful London-based collective of producers, Sage Sounds.

3. The single

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1A_oasYMeV9s-PG47XF1OoFiZO4j4d6bk?usp=sharing

4. The remix

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aBM9OkLIJCnoHJDIL_-GzjqcSWpqdQj1?usp=sharing

5. Production processes

Due to the originally recorded material Anna provided not comprising a release quality, I was tasked with arranging, and producing the composition before I could then mix and master the audio to EBU R 128 broadcast standard protocols[1].

Cohen registered the compositions with PRS and MCPS for the performance and streaming royalty collection as well as PPL to not only obtain an ISRC registration number for the composition but enable mechanical royalties to be collected too.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XL3cCcPkmOAV8LnbtXZkX8cs0prbrlKd?usp=sharing

6. Artwork & iconography

The chosen artwork used for the single cover was proposed and provided by Cohen. It is a photograph of her mother holding her as a young child, which we all agreed was not only visually encapsulating but also would be a great cover because it contained the individual referenced in the lyrics as well as the artist, Cohen, herself.

When comparing other artwork used for musical releases with a lyrical narrative around family or mothers, we found similarities with numerous highly successful releases, such as Sister Sledge – 'We Are Family', Kacey Musgraves – 'Family is Family', and Sly and the Family Stone - 'Family Affair' (*Timeout,* 2021)

The font used for the logo is a scan of Cohen's mother's handwriting imported into photoshop and overlayed onto the photograph.

The press photographs were taken by three individuals known to Cohen - Nick Anastasiou, Steve Ullathorne, and Johnny Ng - to assist her developing career. They were all instructed to sign the image IP transfer contracts, authorising "The A-Team" as IP rights owners to then exploit for this campaign.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gp6gOE1Rfl7BUYNYvsPFLBpnxqDl0F9s?usp=sharing

[1] …"In August 2010, the EBU published the first version of its Loudness Recommendation EBU R128 (now in version 4.0). It tells how broadcasters can measure and normalise audio using Loudness meters instead of Peak Meters (PPMs) only, as has been common practice". (*EBU*, 2010)

7. Behind-the-scenes content

We had our photographer and videographer digitally document the song writing session for the single.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1nSjcp38jp5xaMZfSdQ3OHan1YhXmN1Zg?usp=sharing

8. Legal

I formulated a three-way UK partnership named "The A-Team" and made a contract between Cohen, Morgan & myself as equal shareholding partners. This partnership is acting as a record company and IP Rights holder for the campaign. I created the IP Transfer contracts for all parties involved in photography, videography, and composition, and lastly created the artist performance contract with the London venue, The Water Rats.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15RVWUWwGvpvhnMOSwBuOxYANWqalwZX9?usp=sharing

9. One sheet / EPK

I formulated the One-Sheet on a more traditional approach comprising details appertaining to the artist; the release (including ISRC details), tour dates, and industry feedback received. The one sheet also had a hyperlink embedded to a private server which contains a more in-depth biography and release information, press shots, both the single and remix as well as links to all social media platforms and a management email address I set up for this purpose.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12XQZL33V9x_VYATM2S_QfvPczsPTedSc?usp=sharing

10. Promotion

To facilitate a marketing strategy for the artist, single and remix release, including plans for radio, club, live, digital promotion, media engagements and brand endorsements, we decided that my friends and previous colleagues, Steve Ripley and Niven Govinden at Soulfood[2] were best suited due to the extreme successes they have provided multiple artists of similar genres for over 30 years, since when they were Directors at Sony Urban as well as CBS prior to the Sony purchase.

With streaming DSPs changing the promotion tactics required, most tracks are serviced once they are released. So upon advice from Govinden, we decided we would run an eight-week campaign on release, (rather than the pre-release as we used to do). This would be divided into the first four weeks for the single and the second four weeks for the remix at approximately £1.5k for the campaign. They facilitate the industry feedback and reviews used in the One-Sheet / EPK, digital press and club promotion for £400, independent radio airplay and playlist plugging for £500, and remixes for £600.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CzXjRB1sPjRHU4x6tHneyZQ4abEa4WCF?usp=sharing

[2] "SOULFOOD MUSIC is a UK-based Soul/black music genre promotion company - based with Music House. Offering worldwide independent promotion. With extensive backgrounds running promotional and marketing campaigns at major labels, SOULFOOD MUSIC brings to the table a depth of experience few other independent companies can match. including the national and regional specialist DJs and producers at BBC Radio 1 / 1Xtra / Capital Xtra / Kiss / Rinse FM. Treated with equal importance are the vast array of digital and online stations, ensuring full coverage for your release and remixes across plays, playlists, and interviews.
Teaming up with EuroSolution. All DJs return their charts weekly to attain chart position". (*Soulfood*, 2022)

11. Single Launch

To give focus to the single launch, we decided to organize a formal event. We wanted an intimate venue in central London which was reasonably priced and was 'all-inclusive' for the security, venue staff, lighting, and sound equipment, including the technical operators. This was suggested by Morgan and agreed upon by a majority within the group, after detailed discussions with a full list of decision-making and reasons given detailed within the "Launch Gig" report.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Wjro8UpwguqWtGP5lvZYUt1MdgZEc-UB?usp=sharing

12. Budget

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AuWi9Ejecsej88dJQ68KlhAoE1r9zY2Y?usp=sharing

13. Technology and social media

I established a Google shared drive system to collate all the content and media for both sharing with producers working on the remix and individuals within the group to facilitate access to each other's content and accountability of work designated throughout the project.
I additionally established a WhatsApp group for "The A-Team" where we held discussions relating to the tasks or relevant solutions proposed.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1L7BQjdYli5ZE53qUvdbQZ0Nph87nQTbN?usp=sharing

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