

Creative Music Management (BMTY7000)

Reflective Summary

Jack Smith

2006199

Harry Leckstein

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This reflective essay will be split into two distinct sections. My first section will analyse my own contribution to the group tasks and suggest areas for future focus. In the second section of this piece, I will utilise a range of sources to evaluate the impact that recent technological developments have had on the production and delivery of popular music. In particular, I will focus on the augmentation of revenue streams through developments in streaming, as well as the importance of technology to the continuation of workflow throughout the pandemic.

- a) Your involvement in the group portfolio and presentation task to create a single, remix and associated media assets.

My first contribution to this project came early in our process. At the very start of this task I think that we wanted to tackle the brief as a collective, inputting our own ideas into each stage of planning. It became clear quite quickly that this approach was ineffective. This was because our objectives and the key requirements of the project were being overlooked (Barker & Cole, 2007, p. 16). In order to address this issue, I suggested that we divide up the workload based on our own experiences and expertise. For example, as her job involves dealing with spreadsheets and finance, Lucy was tasked with 'Project Management and Finances'. The other areas of focus were 'Promotion', 'Marketing', 'PR' and 'Distribution'. I suggested myself for 'Promotion' because of my previous experience formulating engaging campaigns which increase exposure, whilst adhering to a restrictive budget. As Creative Director of Jazz collective, Readymeal Sound, I orchestrated a national Livestream tour which attracted over 30,000 views and generated a following increase of 1,340% (Readymeal Sound, 2020). This was achieved through partnerships with over 30 venues and with no paid promotion. Due to increased exposure, artists who took part in this project have gone on to secure live slots, management deals and commercial partnerships. My aim for this project was to utilise my limited but useful contacts and experience to formulate an equally effective and cost-efficient promotional campaign for Peonie. With the scope of my contribution defined (promotion), the task of constructing an effective plan became far more manageable (Barker & Cole, 2007, p. 16).

I first defined the objectives of my promotional plan. The overarching goals of my plan were three-fold. Firstly, I wanted to build anticipation for the release of 'Mistakes and Heartbreaks' amongst Peonie's followers and potential new fans. The second objective of the promotional plan was to prolong the point of peak interest in the single through an engaging post-release campaign. It has become increasingly important for artists to exploit multiple revenue streams (Macy, Rolston, Allen and Hutchison, 2016, p. 9). My final objective, therefore, was to propose ideas which could do just

this. In considering how best to achieve these objectives, it was crucial that I was realistic with the resources available to me (Barker & Cole, 2007, p. 21). For me, this meant considering how I could utilise my contacts to limit expenditure, as well as carefully considering any services we would make use of to avoid any financial risks through high up-front costs. Two further considerations were of equal importance. Firstly, the plan had to be bespoke and tailored to Peonie's strengths. In addition, I thought that it would be helpful for any plans to have a long-term impact which would extend beyond the bounds of this campaign. For example, Peonie has had considerable success on TikTok, amassing over 3,000 followers, less than a year since joining the platform (TikTok, 2020). TikTok is becoming an increasingly important marketing tool for emerging artists, with over 70 artists breaking on the platform and being subsequently signed to major labels in 2020 (Stassen, 2020). I therefore saw both a short-term and long-term benefit to utilising TikTok in my promotional plan.

My first idea was to organize a live event to showcase the single. A live show was a vital element of the plan because a strong live presence is an essential component to a successful career in the music industry (Macy, Rolston, Allen and Hutchison, 2016, p. 166). The plan that I created demonstrates my efforts to ensure that every aspect was covered. Next Door Records (NDR) was chosen as the venue because my prior connection to the owners guaranteed us ease of access. In addition, I regularly attend the venue myself and have seen first-hand the impact the new venue is having on the culture in Shepherds Bush. In order to pull the event together, I kept in regular contact with the owners via texts and personal meetings. In negotiations, it was my job to secure the booking by addressing any concerns that the venue owners had. For example, NDR were very happy with Peonie's music, but they were concerned that it may be too 'mainstream pop-like' for their regular attendees (Aukett, Rayworth and Paris, 2020). As a solution to this problem, we agreed to host the event as an acoustic show, which also better suits the intimate setting of the venue. The deal was kept as simple as possible and aimed at mitigating risk for both parties. We retained the profit from all tickets sold online. We did not need to pay any cost for venue hire. In lieu of this cost, any tickets sold on the door would go to NDR. This deal means that we do not risk any money with up-front costs and may be the exclusive earners from ticket sales. However, NDR are protected if we fail to sell out the event as they can still make money on the door as well as the bar. I attempted to be as thorough as I could here, although there were to elements which my plan overlooks which I would aim to address had I more time. Organized within an intimate setting from 7pm, this would be an ideal event to invite a couple of industry figures too, to hear Peonie perform (Allen, 2018, p. 95). Over the coming weeks, I would look to speak with Peonie in detail about her immediate goals to figure out who we could invite to the show. For example, it may be helpful to reach out to an agent or two to help Peonie secure further bookings. A mailing list remains one of the most important marketing tools available to us (Owsinski, 2017, p. 79). This point is made even more prudent by Godin's supposition of the demise of the 'four P's' (Macy, Rolston, Allen and Hutchison, 2016, p. 36). I overlooked this when suggesting

promotional ideas for the event. This could be remedied by spending some time building out Peonie's mailing list over the next few months, although would require some additional research and potential funding.

My approach to the post-release campaign that I came up with derived from a conversation that I had with Richard Engler (Autonomy Music Group). Richard said that in the work that Autonomy did, their main role was to manage the project, getting the right people on board and then ensuring that all assets are delivered on time. All that is left is to add some creative flair which helps the project to stand out (Engler, 2020). I wanted an idea that played to Peonie's strengths, yet displayed some innovation, whilst being of limited risk. With an understanding that any idea is either of one's own creation or a development of another idea (Birley and Muzyka, 2000, p. 35) I drew on Ashnikko's recent campaign for inspiration (Music Ally, 2020, p. 6) and developed it to better suit Peonie and our forthcoming release. The resulting strategy helps build the profile of the single by mobilising her fanbase whilst exploiting an additional revenue stream. Essentially, we are asking her fans to invest their time and money in exchange for limited edition merchandise and the chance to be a part of Peonie's campaign. While Peonie has developed a strong following already, there remains the possibility that the plan will not have the desired effect due to insufficient participation. It is not possible to remove this risk all together, however the financial risk is mitigated completely by utilising the services of Everpress to manufacture and distribute our merchandise. Through their made to order service, we bare no up-front costs and are still able to generate a heavy profit in the case that the plan is successful (Everpress, 2020). I believe that this was my greatest contribution to this project, successfully extending interest in the single and meeting all of my objectives.

My final idea was to capture a video of Peonie performing an acoustic version of Mistakes and Heartbreaks. While this would not help to bring in a new revenue stream, this asset would help to maintain the interest in the single after its release. It is interesting to note that artists are frequently built on the perception that they are bigger than they are (O'Dair & Beaven, 2017). With this in mind, I sought to utilise the services of a close friend of mine who films and edits videos professionally for a large company. He agreed to film our performance on a 6K Black Magic camera, free of charge at his office which has a view across London (Balfour, 2020). The location and the quality of the end product would add a sense of splendour and mystery to Peonie as an artist which I hoped listeners would find intriguing. Unfortunately, the continuous changing of restrictions as a result of Covid-19 have prevented us from filming on several occasions. Here, our forward planning and generous timeframe allow us plenty of time to reschedule this shoot. There is a shortcoming of this idea. We failed to discuss how we would post the footage, and this drew my attention to the very limited following that Peonie has on YouTube. YouTube is becoming an increasingly important promotional tool, and with a fully developed monetized ecosystem, offers an additional revenue stream to those

who know how to utilise it. Through the new ‘super chat’ and ‘super sticker’ features, Japanese artist, Reol, was able to generate over \$130,000 through one livestream (Dredge, 2020). For the purposes of this campaign, IGTV will be a suitable location for the upload. However, I would argue that our team should later focus on building Peonie’s YouTube presence to later exploit the platform as an additional source of revenue.

In conclusion, I believe that I have made a valuable contribution to this project. I have noticed some areas which require additional focus which I will be able to address as the project progresses.

- b) Your Reflections on the impact of all types of digital technologies with reference to the creation and promotion of original popular music and team development on creative industry projects.

In 1999, having achieved an all-time high of £30.6bn in profit, Napster caused the global music industry to crash (Forde, 2019), instigating a revolution in the way that music is distributed, sold and consumed. As a result of peer-to-peer sharing, music industry profits fell for 15 years to less than \$8bn (Routley, 2018). It was the emergence of paid streaming services which led to music’s eventual bounce back, with the medium of listening becoming the most profitable format in 2018 (Wolfson, 2018). In recent years, streaming and the services that deal with it has become an increasingly controversial topic because of the micropayments that artists earn for each stream. In a most recent development, the UK government established an inquiry “to examine what economic impact music streaming is having on artists, record labels and the sustainability of the wider music industry” (UK Parliament, 2020). The arguments which surround the streaming debate are complex and beyond the scope of this discussion. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in a financial sense, the streaming model saved the music industry from further decline (Nicolauou, 2017). In addition, music’s revolution has led to increased innovation and continuous developments which mitigate risk for players, therefore increasing music’s accessibility. Before streaming, releasing a new single would have carried a significant financial risk. CD’s and vinyl would need to be pressed and stored. Now, a service like CD Baby can make an artist’s new single available across the world for as little as \$9.95 (CD Baby, 2021). Within merchandising, Everpress will make designs to order in exchange for a higher percentage of profits than traditional retailers (Everpress, 2021). These developments mean that projects with low budgets such as ours can still develop well rounded and profitable campaigns without the need for label funding.

In addition to the greater accessibility afforded to the music community, developments have greatly augmented existing revenue streams whilst developing new ones. Elsewhere in this essay I have made a mention of how Japanese artist, Reol, was able to generate \$130,000 through a single livestream

(Dredge, 2020). YouTube have also partnered to key ticketing services including See Tickets, meaning artists with upcoming shows can advertise tickets on their YouTube channels (Hanley, 2019). The following diagram displays an analysis of revenue streams in 2016 (Macy, Rolston, Allen and Hutchison, 2016, p. 7). If we dug further into these categories today, you would find that the reality is far more

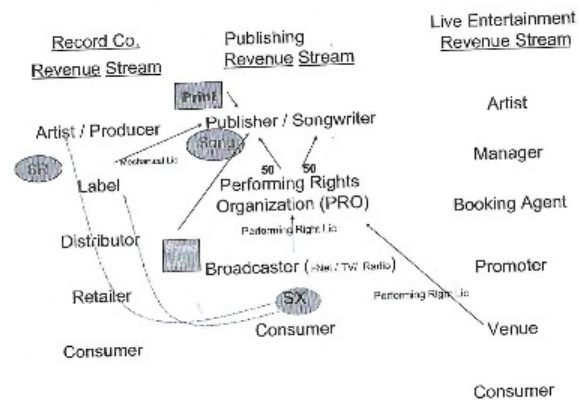


FIGURE 1.7 Music Industry Revenue Streams

complex than this graph suggests. The most recent revolutionary development to emerge is an explosion in Livestreaming. Issues remain around streaming. For example, models need to emerge which respect the rights of creators and rights holders (Israelite, 2020). In addition, the industry still needs to figure out scalability and pricing models as well as find ways to make virtual events more engaging for fans (Schabel, 2020). Nevertheless, with Spotify now experimenting with live streaming events (Stassen, 2020), there is no doubt that this is an area which will become an increasingly important element of artists income. It is therefore clear that while the situation is becoming increasingly complex, developments in digital technologies continue to forge new potential revenue streams for artists at all stages in their careers.

Releasing music is one major part of the music industry. Nevertheless, the release of music wouldn't matter nearly as much were it not for the team behind the scenes, who craft a project like the one we have put together for Peonie. Videoconferencing (which I will refer to as zooming) became a part of working life relatively seamlessly when lockdown was first introduced in response to the Covid-19 outbreak of 2020 (Robinson, 2020). In a little over a month, the Zoom platform had gone from relatively unknown to boasting 200 million daily users (Forde, 2020). Zoom and working from home will probably not completely replace offices. People still need social interactions and there is a continuity which gets lost in hosting zoom meetings at increasingly disparate points in the day. However, the number of daily users which I have noted shows how vital this technological development has been to the delivery of musical projects. The additional connection that this technology provides can be observed in the ways in which artists have used the tool to connect with fans. Tom Walker, for example, was able to host a 12-hour world tour through the platform (Dredge, 2020).

Overall, I have provided evidence for the considerable impact that new technologies have had on the creation and release of pop music in recent year. I have suggested that further developments are likely to emerge as changes within the industry often lead to further innovation.

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