



## YXNG BANE: ENTERTAINMENT MARKETING REPORT

**Level 7, Semester 2**  
**Module Code: SBTY7003**  
**Module Title: Entertainment Marketing**  
**Assessment Type: Portfolio**  
**Assessment/Component: 1/2**  
**Component Weighting: 75%**  
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**Assignment Title: Entertainment Marketing Report**  
**Word Count: 3665**

CONTENTS:

Table of Contents

CONTENTS: ..... 2

OVERVIEW: ..... 3

PART 1: THE ARTIST ..... 4

PART 2: MARKET ANALYSIS ..... 6

PART 3: AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION..... 9

PART 4: MARKETING STRATEGY ..... 10

PART 5: SUMMARY ..... 14

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 15

## OVERVIEW:

Despite the fact that it once represented the lion share of the revenue generated within the music industry, the global recorded music sector today serves as “the engine helping to drive a much broader music industry” (O'Malley Greenburg, 2011). Prior to the recent uplift in revenue, the global music industry saw 15 consecutive years of decline (IFPI, 2018), losing over 40% of revenue streams in the process. Much of this improved growth is as a result of the arrival of music streaming platforms. As of November 2017, Spotify, the largest of these services, has over 60m paid subscribers and over 140m active users (Spotify, 2017a). Their artist insight tools have provided new scope for marketers worldwide in their quests to better connect with audiences and understand consumption habits. Introduced by Lieberman and Esgate (2013, p 11-22), the “4 Cs” of marketing for the entertainment industry outline the core factors that underpin the way a marketing plan is designed to evoke an emotional attachment and therefore, maximise consumption. These include:

1. Content: the entertainment product
2. Conduit: 'pipes' that deliver product to consumer
3. Consumption: consumable action of product
4. Convergence: technology that transmit content for consumption

This report utilises these four factors to successfully outline the marketing strategy for the UK urban recording artist, Yxng Bane. It begins by detailing Yxng Bane's style and current standing in the UK music industry. Following this, this report examines the current market and analyses the trends and competitors that Bane faces. It then explores the audiences to which Yxng Bane most appeals, based on insights. Lastly, this report outlines the go-to-market, growth and release strategy of a variety of assets including an album, videos, tour and merchandise. It also includes an example budget for this release. This report concludes by affirming Bane's position as a promising artist in the UK urban music sphere who has the potential to make waves on a global scale.

## PART 1: THE ARTIST

### 1.1 – About Yxng Bane

Yxng Bane is a rapper of Central African descent who was raised in Newham, London (Nwosu, 2018). His eclectic style incorporates elements of African, Caribbean, American and British music in what many commentators have come to refer to as ‘Afro Bashment’ – a genre that “displays the true complexity of black British life” (Awoyera, 2017). His career quickly blossomed after his first online appearance in 2015 on music streaming platform Soundcloud (Martin, 2018). Initially hesitant to show his face in his videos – Bane sourced his moniker and trademark mask from the antagonist in the 2012 Christopher Nolan film, *The Dark Knight Rises* – Bane has gone on to achieve wider mainstream success since removing the mask and embracing his roguish good looks (Armstrong, 2017). After achieving top 10 successes twice in the last twelve months (Official Charts, 2018) and collaborating with artists ranging from Ed Sheeran to Tinie Tempah, whose record label Disturbing London is now also home to Bane (BBC, 2018), the forthcoming year is set to be even more fruitful for the East London rapper.

### 1.2 – Yxng Bane statistics

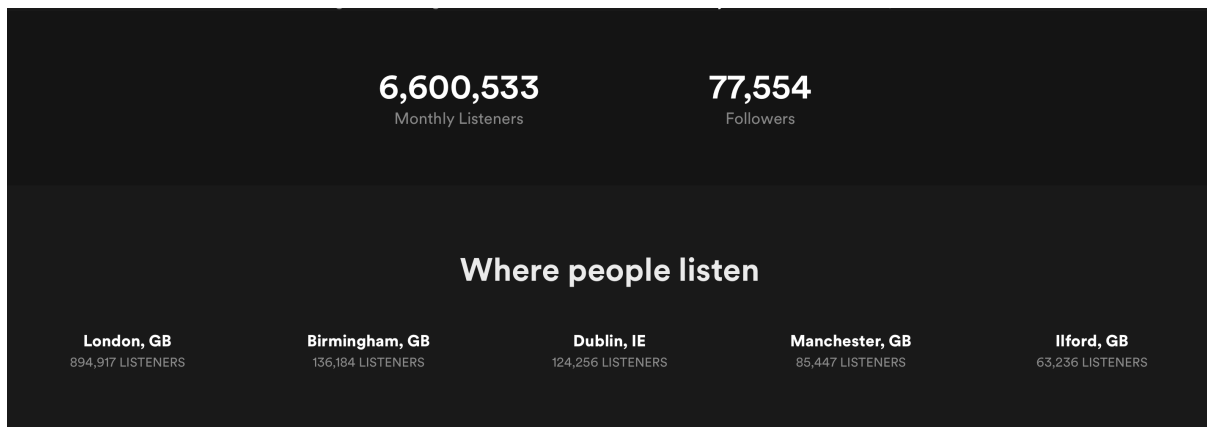


Figure 1: Yxng Bane Spotify statistics (Spotify for Artists, 2018)

Braverman (2015) highlights the importance of data in informing brands and companies on how to “deliver strategic actions to brand promises.” Swedish music streaming service, Spotify, provides the most transparent overview of an artist’s streaming statistics. Their aim as a service is to provide “insights, guides, and tools to help artists get the most out of Spotify” (Spotify for Artists, 2018). Yxng Bane currently has over 6.6 million monthly listeners – the number of unique Spotify users who listen to a song by an artist or band at least once within a calendar month (Spotify, 2016) – of which almost 15% are based in and around his hometown of London. This points towards an importance in building a regional fan base before moving towards national and continental growth. The statistics also show

that Yxng Bane is most popular in England and Ireland. These statistics can be used to formulate a touring schedule based on the most popular regions amongst Bane’s audience.

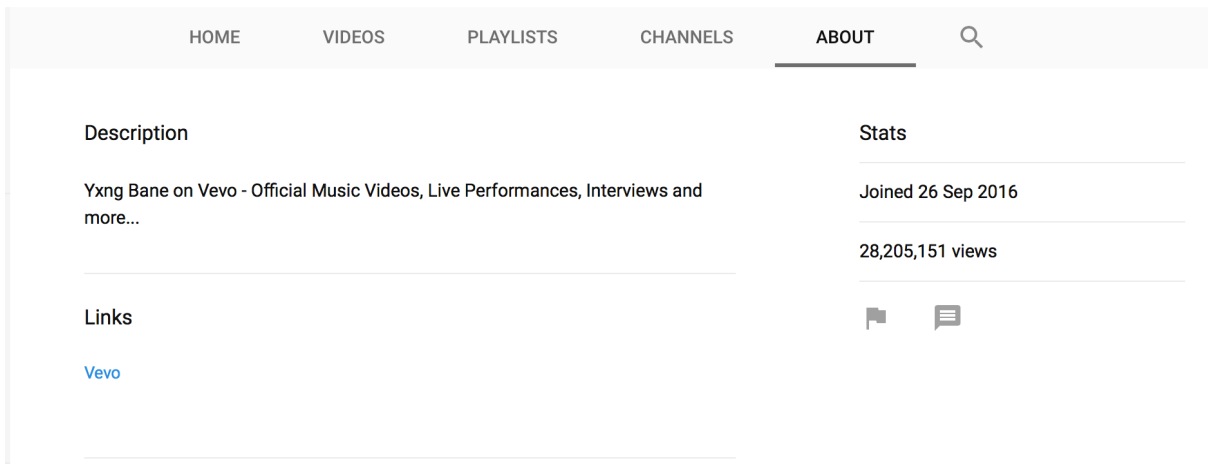


Figure 2: Yxng Bane YouTube statistics (VEVO, 2018)

Bane has amassed almost 30 million views on his official VEVO account and more than 100 million views across his entire videography on YouTube. He also has nearly 250,000 combined followers across the three main social networks; Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (Instagram, 2018). It is clear that he has learned how to effectively engage with his audience on social media given the numbers that he has accumulated in such a short time. It is therefore now required to look at the wider market to see how Bane can most efficiently operate.

## PART 2: MARKET ANALYSIS

### 2.1 – Current industry trends

The music industry in the UK is currently an exciting sphere. The BPI (BPI, 2018) reports that 2017 saw music consumption across all formats grow at its fastest rate this millennium – a gain to the tune of 9.5%. Yxng Bane collaborator Ed Sheeran also landed the year’s biggest single with his smash-hit *Shape of You* (BPI, 2018). This growth in the recorded music sector is also supported globally. The IFPI’s Global Music Report (IFPI, 2018) indicates that following 15 years of decline, the global recorded music industry saw its third consecutive year of growth in 2017, with Ed Sheeran again the number one artist. These remarkable statistics have also had positive effects on the consumptions of urban music and hip-hop culture; the scene has seen a large-scale resurgence amongst mainstream audiences. This is evidenced by the recognition of UK urban music by major institutions such as the BRIT Awards, who had previously come under much scrutiny for the perceived lack of ethnic and musical diversity amongst nominees (Hancox, 2016). Since then, other awarding bodies, media platforms and broadcasters have embraced urban culture in ways that were formerly unimaginable. For an artist such as Yxng Bane, this can only be viewed as a positive and there are hopes that the market will continue to foster future talents in the same way. Nevertheless, there are some who question whether this is a genre that is here to stay or merely a fad that will pass in time (Awoyera, 2017).

### 2.2 – Major competitors

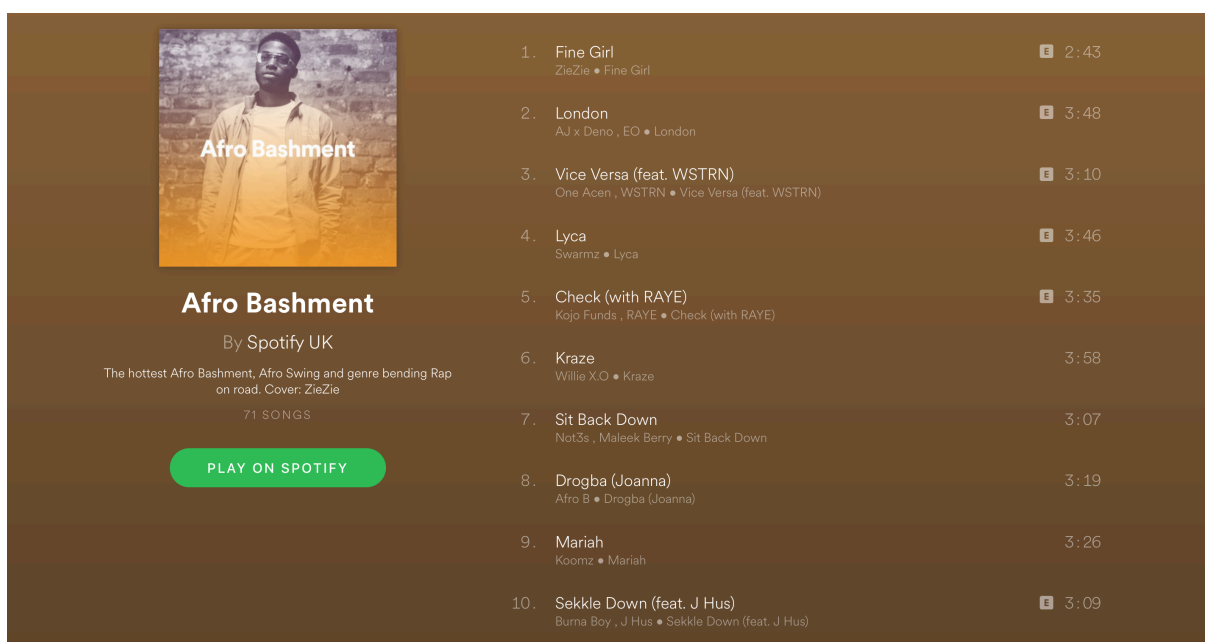


Figure 3: Spotify UK, Afro Bashment playlist (Spotify, 2018)

Yxng Bane's major competitors primarily exist within the urban music scene. Whilst Grime acts such as Skepta and Stormzy have experienced commercial success in recent times (Robertson, 2017), Bane's music and style fits in to a slightly different segment of the market. His closest contemporaries could be considered to be J Hus, Not3s and Kojo Funds – three artists also from East London who currently occupy places in the top 10 of Spotify UK's Afro-Bashment playlist (see Figure 3). This playlist has amassed nearly 140,000 as of May 2018 in just over a year since launching, proving the power and influence of this emerging fusion genre. Yxng Bane's latest release *Vroom* currently sits just outside of the top 10 on this playlist (Spotify, 2018).

## 2.3 – Focus group analysis

A focus group operates as “an informal discussion among a group of selected individuals about a particular topic” (Liamputtong, 2011, p 2). Distinct from a group interview, the focused issue remains the key concern. The emphasis is therefore placed on interaction between participants of the focus group (Liamputtong, 2011, p 31). David Morgan (Morgan, 2002), a distinguished focus group researcher, indicates that market research typically adopts a more structured approach than other methods towards focus group research, meaning that moderators must always take a visible and active role in the group.

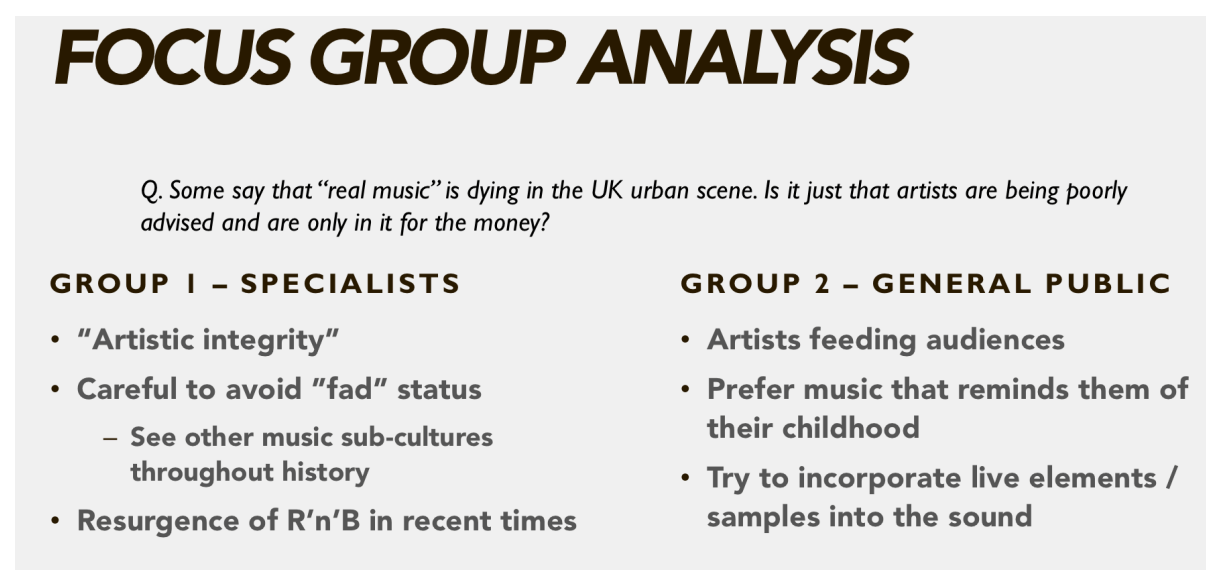


Figure 4: Focus Group Analysis

Participants in our focus groups were split in to two groups: Group 1 contained industry specialists and prominent figures within the urban music sector whilst Group 2 was made up of music fans and general listeners. Of the 12 participants in each group, eight were female and four were male. Each focus group lasted for a total of between 45-60 minutes. The focus group moderator posted an open-ended question to the two groups: “Some say that “real music” is dying in the UK urban scene. Is it

just that artists are being poorly advised and are only in it for the money?” The results, as detailed in Figure 4, show that artistic integrity was a key factor in people’s decisions as to whether an artist would be able to achieve any sort of longevity in their career. There was also a particular fondness towards music that incorporates live elements and samples into the sound – a result that bodes well for an artist such as Bane.

## 2.4 – Opportunity analysis

| STRENGTHS                                                             | WEAKNESSES                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strong sound and image                                                | Lack of long-term precedent amongst contemporaries                   |
| Good network of collaborators and friends in industry                 | No full-length body of work currently available to test the audience |
| Relatively large amount of success achieved in a short period of time | Independent label does not have the same power as a major            |
| OPPORTUNITIES                                                         | THREATS                                                              |
| Can grow as a live artist in both the UK, Europe and Africa           | Afro Bashment genre may die out                                      |
| Fashion / clothing brand as an offshoot                               | May end up type-cast / not able to change sound                      |
| Large scale brand partnerships due to strong image                    | Popularity of the sound means a large number of competitors exist    |

Figure 5: SWOT Analysis

Bane is an artist that has the potential to grow exponentially provided the right tools are employed. It is therefore crucial to analyse his strengths and weaknesses as an artist before exploring the opportunities for growth and the potential threats to this (see Figure 5). It is clear from this analysis that Bane can successfully utilise his existing relationships to “reach beyond [his] existing demand” (Chan Kim, 2005) and grow his audience outside of the urban music sphere. This has already been evidenced through his collaborations with mainstream artists such as Ella Eyre and Ed Sheeran. It is therefore now imperative to examine the different segments of the market that Bane can target.

## PART 3: AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

### 3.1 – Demographics and audience insights

According to Spotify (Spotify for Brands, 2018), 68% of streams amongst millennial audiences happen on mobile devices. When considering the fact that millennials are the largest adopters of smartphones – devices considered to be “a necessity in modern daily life and an indispensable item when on the go” (Nielsen, 2016) – this information is particularly pertinent. Nielsen (2016) indicates that 98% of 18-24 year olds in the US own a smartphone, with 51% of these using an Android operating system. It has been established by academics such as Vitale (Vitale, 2010) that curating content to different segments of the audience who share interests and needs can spawn higher conversions. This increase in relevancy and loyalty through targeted marketing is achieved by identifying audiences based on a range of segments from geography to demographics, psychographics, behaviour and attitudes.

Yxng Bane’s current audience is heavily skewed towards females in the 13-25 age bracket (Instagram, 2018). They are also primarily based in the UK’s major towns and cities (Spotify for Artists, 2018). Based on government statistics, England has an estimated urbanised population of 45.9 million (HM Government, 2012). The aim is to target 10% of this audience (4.59 million) through targeted advertising campaigns and content that has been tailored to increase engagement. This will allow Bane to eventually grow his audience in markets across Europe and Africa.

## PART 4: MARKETING STRATEGY

### 4.1 – Asset deliverables

Bane will deliver a soft-release single and video, followed by a lead single and full album release. As part of this rollout, a UK and Ireland tour will be programmed alongside a national and international promotion schedule. A limited clothing run designed by the artist will be released, with orders only available by telephone and collection. The video for the first single will be shot in Bane's native Angola and streamed live at sites across the UK and Africa. There will also be free pop-up performances of the song with a mobile-band announced 48 hours before via Bane's social media accounts. Fans must follow Bane and comment on the post to gain access to tickets. The album will be released alongside a short film detailing the life story of Bane and his journey back to his roots in Africa to perform for the first time (Nwosu, 2018). Alternate and custom designs of Bane's exclusive merchandise will be given to the highest streaming fans within 3 months of the album's release and will be filmed for social media.

### 4.2 – Go-to-market strategy

Yxng Bane is an artist operating on an independent record label, in Disturbing London (BBC, 2018). It is therefore crucial that the go-to-market strategy operates in a *lean* way. "Lean" is Japanese business structure based on the Toyota Production System (TPS) that aims to eradicate waste by emphasising consumer desires (Maurya, 2012, pp. XXIII). Steve Blank's Customer Development method outlines a four-step process intended to produce a "continuous feedback loop with customers throughout the product development cycle" (Maurya, 2012, pp. XXIII). This process is outlined below:

1. Find
  - a. Find a group of early adopters within a core group as opposed to a mass audience
  - b. Test whether they have this problem that you think they have
  - c. Determine whether the problem exists and is worth solving
2. Confirm
  - a. Confirm whether the solution you're providing solves the problem
3. Scale
  - a. Understand whether this is a wider problem that relates to multiple audiences
4. Invest
  - a. Seek the investment of money and resources towards building the wider business

The initial group of early adopters have already been identified through Spotify for Artists' insight tools (Spotify for Artists, 2018). These can be used to satisfy stage 1 of the four-step process. Secondly,

Bane's commercial success thus far (Official Charts, 2018) serves as confirmation of the fact that he is providing a solution to the problems of the consumer. Bane's statistics across streaming and video websites (VEVO, 2018) also show that the audience exists on a wider scale. It is therefore left to investors to channel together resources that can aid the building of Bane's career on an international level.

#### 4.3 – Growth strategy



Figure 6: Yxng Bane collaboration with Dope Chef (Instagram, 2018)

Yxng Bane currently operates in partnership with a number of brands and platforms. It is commonly recognised that strategic brand partnerships allow for a mutual benefit by enabling established brands to “reach new markets, gain greater distribution and dovetail on their partner’s previously established momentum” (Lotman, 2017). Bane has utilised this technique successfully, partnering with iconic global fashion brands such as Adidas and Diadora as well as independent labels like Dxpe Chef (see Figure 6). It is imperative that Bane continues to target niche fashion brands to collaborate with in order to aid his growth and influence within the urban music sphere. Bane will also target growth in the Spotify UK Afro Bashment playlist as well as the playlists at the major radio broadcasters across the UK. Lastly, Bane should seek to obtain platinum status (over 300,000 copies sold in the UK (Wikipedia, 2018)) on his album within a year of release. Bane's success can be measured as outlined in figure 7.

| Goals                            | Success                                                                      |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Certify Afro Bashment as a genre | Achieve platinum status on the album within 1 year of release                |
| Wider reach                      | Increase Spotify audience to 20m listeners and 500k followers within 2 years |
| Improve live stage show          | Headline at major UK festival (Glastonbury / Reading & Leeds) within 3 years |

Figure 7: Measuring Success (Table)

#### 4.4 – Timeline

Below is a detailed plan and timeline of the release schedule for Bane’s deliverable assets:

| Phase 1: Research and Development                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                 | Phase 2:<br>Lead up and influencer marketing                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6-4 months ahead                                                                                                                              | 3 months – 7 weeks ahead                                                                                                                        | 6 weeks – Launch date                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Audience insights</li><li>Video production 1</li><li>Clothing designs</li></ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Social media streamlining</li><li>Video production 2</li><li>Clothing manufactured</li></ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Blogger &amp; influencer promotion</li><li>Engage with print media</li><li>Album artwork graphic design</li></ul>                   |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Phase 3:<br>Album launch                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Launch                                                                                                                                        | 1 month after                                                                                                                                   | 2 -3 months after                                                                                                                                                         | 3-6 months after and beyond                                                                                                                                                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Release album</li><li>Press/media features</li><li>Pop-up shows</li><li>Social media takeover</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Announce tour</li><li>Release merchandise</li><li>New brand partnership</li><li>Video 2 release</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Announce festival headline slot to close tour</li><li>Fan meet ups</li><li>Social media growth</li><li>Final album single</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Begin tour</li><li>Achieve platinum status</li><li>Increase Spotify audience to 10m listeners</li><li>Increase Spotify followers to 250k</li></ul> |

## 4.5 – Budget

The IFPI Global Music Report (IFPI, 2018) indicates that a budget in the region of US\$500,00 – 2,000,000 is needed to break a worldwide signed artist in a major market such as the US or UK. As Yxng Bane is an independent artist with smaller initial ambitions, this budget has been scaled down as is appropriate. Below is budget for the release and promotion of Bane’s deliverable assets:

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**Artist:** Yxng Bane

**Album:** *Untitled*

**Format:** LP, CD, Digital

**Release Date:** Q4 2018

**Total Budget:** £250,000

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### Artist advance

- **On signing:** £50,000
- **On delivery:** £40,000

### Video production

- **Video 1:** £10,000
- **Video 2 / Film:** £15,000

### Asset design

- **Album artwork:** £1000
- **Photography:** £5000
- **Website:** £4000

### Album

- **Recording:** £10,000
- **Mix and master:** £10,000

### Production and distribution

- **CD and vinyl production:** £10,000

### Tour

- **5x live shows (1000 capacity each):** £50,000 (total)
- **Merchandise (hats, hoodies, t-shirts):** £15,000

### Marketing & promotion

- **Online:** £10,000
  - **Press & print:** £10,000
  - **Radio:** £10,000
-

## PART 5: SUMMARY

This report has covered the marketing strategy and release plan for the recording artist, Yxng Bane. It has found that the East London rapper possess an enormous amount of potential based on the vast number of streams, plays and followers he has already amassed in a relatively short career coupled with his undeniable talent for making music. The next challenge will be to determine whether the fledging fusion genre that is known as Afro Bashment has staying power or will fade away over time. When analysing the current market, Bane is in a strong position amongst his contemporaries and well poised to deliver a body of work that can stand the test of time. The feedback from focus groups suggests that audiences are optimistic that Afro Bashment artists can incorporate traditional musical elements in a modern way that can help the genre spread on a global scale. There is also evidence to suggest that Bane has a sizeable segment of the market to aim for in his journey towards stardom. Lastly, given his existing relationships with brands and artists alike, there is a solid platform upon which Bane can build. Given the right financial backing and promotion, Bane has all of the necessary ingredients to forge a successful career in music.

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