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**Creation in International Music
Marketing**

Music Marketing Business Reflective Summary

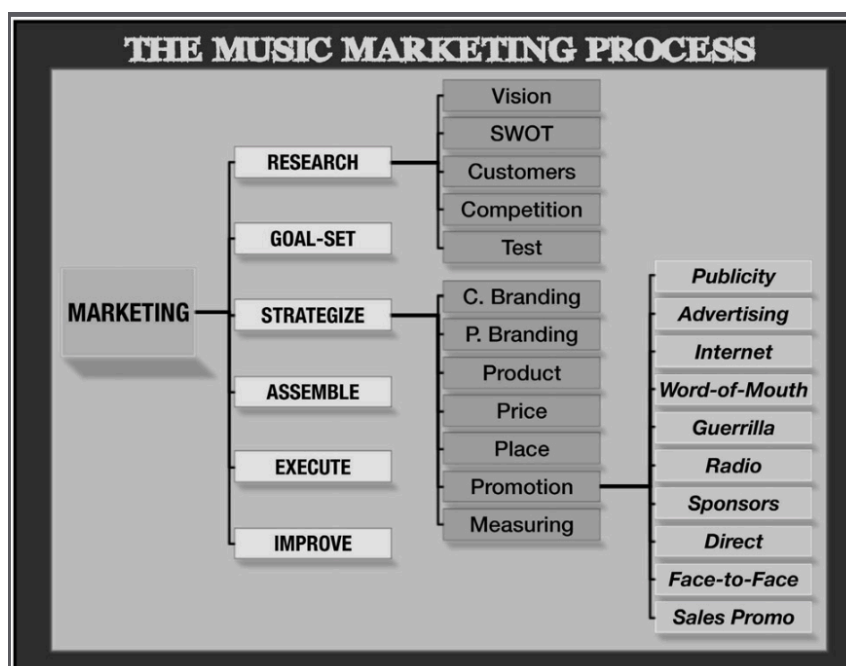
TABLE OF CONTENTS

- The Marketing Plan	p 3
- The Goal	p 4
- The Product: Becky Black	p 4
- The Competitor Analysis.....	p 5
- Target Audience	p 6
- Buyer Persona.....	p 7
- Branding	p 8
- The Budget	p 9
- Marketing Plan.....	p 9
- Marketing Campaign 2023	p 9
- Marketing Campaign 2024	p 11
- Marketing Campaign 2025	p 12
- Conclusion	p 14
- Reference	p 15
- Bibliography	p 16

The Marketing Plan

“Marketing is the process of innovating products and services to satisfy customers, build awareness, and earn market share. To DIY artists pursuing a career in the years 2020 to 2025, it’s the self-starting journey of creating unique music-related content to engage/entertain/influence fans, form industry partnerships, and make money (or just a living) doing what you love.” (Borg, B. 2020)

Author Bobby Borg states that the marketing process starts with a “vision”, something that defines where you’d like your company (in this instance, your act) to be in the next few years (Borg, B 2020) or, as authors Kotler and Armstrong say, “the concept by which companies create value for costumers and build strong costumers relationship in order to capture value from costumers in return” (Kotler and Armstrong, 1996). Like every marketing plan, the main object of focus from which we start our marketing is one, the product: (Tammy D., Amy Sue M., Clyde Philip R. 2022) defined as “something that is produced and offered for sale in the market”. (Luten, 2020) In the music business, that “product” is none other than the artist. Without a “product” to start with, it’d be difficult to start creating a detailed marketing plan and strategy even though, in the Music Business, marketers are often asked to create a basic plan with little informations about the final project, as the music (or final product) might’ve not been created yet. Regardless, adjustments can always be made as the final product develops and in response to the market (Tammy D., Amy Sue M., Clyde Philip R., 2022). In my proposal, I overviewed a strategic 3 year plan on my future career goals as an independent artist. In the following, I will go in depth on the different aspects to take in consideration through my planning decisions, starting from what I consider one of the most important starting point after the product: the long term goal.



[Source: Music Marketing for the DIY Musician, pg 108]

The Goal

As previously stated in my proposal, in order to start creating a marketing plan, artists need to know their long-term goal, their objective. With that in mind, it'd be easier to make decisions, achieve short-term goals and look for the opportunities that best suit the artist.

With my long-term goal being to become a signed artist within the next 5 years, and to financially sustain myself from my music within the next two years, the short-term goals will be ideal milestones I aim to achieve in a 3 years period, that should get me closer to my long-term goal.

Of course, goals are set to help us in creating a clearer plan and making decisions, but they can also change with time and they can change depending on new opportunities or new realisations.

The Product: Becky Black

As we learned by now, the product is one of the main starting point in a marketing plan and strategy. So, how can we start defining the product - in this instance, Becky Black?

Bobby Borg suggests that what can "give you a reference point from which to start your marketing journey." (Borg, B. 2020) for an artist, is the choice on their music genre.

I previously explained how important the choice for a specific genre is for an artist, as it helps with the marketing strategy, the brand, the target audience and any choice moving forward in one's musical career. It also helps in identifying artists within the same genre, which can help in coming up with new ideas for your act, better your brand and target your audience in a more efficient way. In response to this, I always kept a close attention on my favourite artists, such as Lady Gaga, Halsey and Bishop Briggs to name a few. As they are my main source of inspirations, my genre ends being a mix of these artists's: electronic/alternative pop with R&B influences.

Having other artists as a reference also helps in planning your future steps moving forward and can help with the achievement of one's career goals.

For example, in Mathieu Deflem's case study on Lady Gaga on a sociological level, he states that "the case of Lady Gaga is not only spectacular because of its global reach but also, and especially, because it was accomplished in today's hyper-connected world whereby being noticed has, ironically, become more difficult than ever before." (Deflem, M. 2009)

His last statement has a significant weight to it for people who want to succeed in a music career in this day and age: our today's world is indeed hyper-connected, everything is easier to access and an independent artist has full potential to make it happen on his own without a record label but, it is indeed more difficult than ever before. With so much accessibility via online platforms such as

TikTok, Instagram, Spotify, with online distributors such as TuneCore, DistroKid and so on, everyone has the potential to publish their work independently, which in turn made it for a really busy scene where getting noticed has become harder than ever. WMG CEO Steve Cooper spoke at a Goldman Sachs on September 20220, saying that "today, on any given day of the week, roughly 100,000 tracks of music are uploaded to SoundCloud, Spotify, Apple and so on. The complexity of being able to separate one's music from the other 99,999 tracks uploaded that day is incredibly complex and incredibly difficult." (Variety, 2022). Ironically, with so many new tracks being published every day, artists might have to hope in a record deal with a label in order to stand out of the crowd.

The Competitor Analysis

Studying the competitors is useful to develop a winning strategy and learn about the industry. Not only it can give the artist ideas for his act but can also help in building a good brand and make the right decisions in regards of marketing plans.

As previously stated, my main inspirations are artists Lady Gaga, Halsey and Bishop Briggs. They're at different levels of popularity, Lady Gaga with 54 M followers on Instagram, Halsey 30 M and Bishop Briggs 350 K, but they also have different aspects in common:

- They're all singer/songwriters, writing mainly for themselves, with majority of their songs written without other songwriters involved.
- They have similar core values, such as authenticity, women empowerment, they're advocates for different minorities (Lady Gaga has always been a major advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, Halsey has spoken different times about mental health problems and the struggle of endometriosis, Halsey has been open and honest about loss and mental health), they're bold and outspoken.
- Their branding has shifted through their career to reflect their new Albums, but always stayed true to what they represent and the music they write.
- Their music genre, albeit not completely the same, still falls under the "pop music" umbrella, with a few sub genres that make them who they eventually are as an artist.

On top of that, all of them play at least one instrument, which they use to write majority of their songs (Lady Gaga is a great pianist and has performed on a piano different times during her shows).

They all rose to “fame” in different ways: Lady Gaga was writing songs for Sony/ATV when her vocals on a demo caught the attention of singer-songwriter Akon, who eventually had her sign with his own label, “Kon Live”, via which she released her first album, “The Fame”. (IMDb, 2017)

Halsey on the other hand, had what most people would call an “overnight success”: after uploading her first song, “Ghost”, on SoundCloud, “when she logged back on an hour later, her Twitter account was blowing up. By 3 a.m., she says, five labels had contacted her. By morning, the song was charting.” (Morris, 2016)

For Bishop Briggs, it happened “by chance, she was invited by a friend to perform at a songwriter’s roundtable and caught the attention of former A&R representative George Robertson. “George was actually there to see a different artist and luckily he came up to me afterwards,” she says. “He introduced me to two producers and within a month “Wild Horses” was written and got a placement in an Acura commercial for the Super Bowl. The song ended up climbing the charts, entering the top 30 on the Billboard Alternative Songs chart and top 13 on the Billboard Twitter Emerging Artist charts. That was when she signed with Island Records.” (Music Connection Magazine, 2018)

So, what does this tell us? I’d say that consistency and perseverance are key, but sometimes it’s also about having some luck, as in Halsey’s case.

Target Audience

“You have to thoroughly understand your target audience. You must know where and how to reach them with consistent marketing messages designed to communicate your company’s common-ground beliefs, as well as your products’ meaningful and relevant benefits (i.e., what your products do for your target customers). To describe your most likely fans, use any combination of factors you deem relevant and useful, including age range, gender, geographic location, lifestyles (activities, interests, opinions), and behavioural characteristics” (Borg B, 2020)

Lady Gaga statistics show that an average of 52% of her audience is female, with 48% being male; 28% are between 33 to 44 years old, 22% are 45 to 55 and 19% are 25 to 34. (Marketing Charts, 2022)

Haylsey’s audience is more specific, with 77% being female listeners and 23% male listeners, while the main age for her audience, at 48%, is 18 to 24. (cloudcovermusic.com, 2021)

Bishop Briggs has similar audience demographics to Halsey, with a higher percentage of female listeners, at 61%, compared to 39% male listeners, with majority (41%) being between 23 and 27. (the Handbook, 2022)

When analysing Lady Gaga's audience, Mathieu Deflem notes how the world of popular music, which was traditionally associated with teenagers and youth culture, today has shifted to a broader audience of various age groups, ranging from pre-teens to senior citizens. "This broad participation has a commercial aspect in terms of the age categories that are more or less likely to have the financial means to buy music (in the form of recorded music, merchandise, or tickets for live concerts), but also more broadly applies to other forms of involvement in the reception of music, including participation in all kinds of interactions and communications regarding recording and performing musicians, thus contributing to their success and fame". (Deflem, M. p 125, 2017)

Analysing my own audience, they stand at 50% male, 38% Female and 12% not specified, with their age at 25% from 23 to 44 years old, 13% under 18s and 12% 25-59 years old.

To keep in mind that these statistics are currently from what I have released 4 years ago, and I've been inactive for the past two years, so no marketing or targeting has been done. These numbers though give a good starting point to where my audience mainly resides.

Buyer Persona

Creating a buyer persona is useful to plan your marketing strategy and target your audience in the best way. Is not only about the age and gender, but also who they are, what they like, what they do, their psychological profile and so on. "The characteristics widely used by companies to define their market are called segmentation dimensions. These include demographic, psychographic, technographic, behavioral, and geographic factors [...] Having a thorough understanding of your most likely fans and what's important to them will help your company furnish your customers with marketing messages that are clear and relevant, which are important ingredients in branding." (Borg B, p 320 - 341, 2020).

Like Bob Borg states, these buyers are what could eventually become your fanbase, which is why it's useful to create hypothetical buyer personae for a marketing strategy and to create a targeted branding.

Buyer Persona #1: Sarah

Sarah is a 23 year old student at University of Westminster in London. She loves fashion and listens to music everyday via Spotify. She works part-time as a barista. Her income is 21K a year. Her favourite artists are Beyonce, P!nk and Katy Perry. She believes in gender equality, spends a good amount of her free time watching TikToks and Instagram Reels, she actively follows account she's interested in and likes discovering new artists. She goes to live shows sporadically, an average of one every couple of months and she rarely buys merchandise. She's outgoing and likes bright colours.

Buyer Persona #2: Hannah

Hannah is 34 year old from London and works as a publisher for Interscope Records. She goes to live shows at least three times in a month, listens to Spotify everyday and actively searches for new talent. She likes listening to songs from the 80s and one of her favourite artist's in Kate Bush. In her free time she exercises, has a passion for movies from the 50s and likes buying online. Her income is 46K a year.

Branding

“For an artist, **branding** is about clearly communicating who they are and what they represent to the people they are trying to attract. It is all the associations that come to mind when you see or hear a name, and it is the way that one artist is differentiated from all others in the marketplace. [...] When you think about it, each person you encounter is well versed in branding, although they may not realize that is what they are doing when they choose how they will style their hair, what type of clothes they choose to wear, what car they drive, and how they communicate to others. Just like artists, we each have our own brands to manage, which is referred to as **personal branding**. An individual artist's or group's brand involves how they are perceived by the public, fans, corporate brands and advertising agencies, bloggers, playlist curators, and more. The artist's brand has to do with all aspects of their public image from how the artist's website looks, to the album art, to the style and brand of clothing that is worn. Logos, fonts, the look and feel of marketing materials and press kit, live performances, concert merchandise, hair style, videos, wardrobe, what the artist says and does in public, and the brands with which the artist is affiliated all play a role in the development of the artist's brand.” (Tammy D., Amy Sue M., Clyde Philip R., p 74-75, 2022).

Becky Black's branding wants to be a reflection of her music, her lyrics, her influences and her personality. From a comparison with the other artists I follow, my branding wants to be bold, sexy, with a predominance of dark colours. This will also reflect my choice on fashion - dark outfits with a predominance of black, leather and full makeup, highly inspired by Lady Gaga, Halsey and Bishop Briggs's outfits and style. Lady Gaga would be the most “chameleonic” artist when it comes to fashion: her outfits are always changing and unpredictable, majority of times results of a statement or message the artist wants to send. Although mainly viewed as a pop singer, Deflem analyses how her fashion styles include sometimes risky, unsafe elements that are more rock than pop, such as using S&M references, leather, rubber, metal and similar in her clothes. (Deflem, M., 2017)

She's the proof that, regardless of how the general public perceives your genre, you don't have to strictly follow it and mould your style to it. Authenticity to one self's values and beliefs sometimes pays more than following set rules.

The Budget

As previously stated in the proposal, my budget will mainly come from personal savings. It can fluctuate depending on the necessities, but ideally it will be set at £5,000 per year.

This budget also doesn't take in consideration third parties such as labels, sales, live shows, merchandise and so, which would impact the final budget available. I also won't take in consideration any budget left from the previous campaign, as a way to try and see what I could achieve with £5,000 a year.

The Marketing Plan: January 2023 to January 2026

"A marketing plan is "a living, breathing document." In other words, a marketing plan is not something you assemble once and use unchanged for the next year, but rather, it is a fluid tool that is continually revised as you evaluate its performance and observe new marketplace developments on your path to success." (Borg, B. 2020)



Marketing Campaign 2023

The objectives for the year 2023 would mainly be three:

- Record and publish a 6 tracks EP
- Hold an headliner show to promote the EP at the Camden Chapel via the agency TalentBanq
- Increase my overall followings on my main social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook) by 50%.

I set the EP production at £1000. This would include the production, recording

BUDGET 2023	£5,000
EP Production	£1000
Ads	£700
Music Videos	£800
Show	£500
Merchandise	£200
TOTAL EXPENSES 2023	£3,200
BUDGET LEFT	£1,800

and mastering of each tracks. For each of my releases (EP, singles and Album) I'm planning to do the art covers myself to save on budget. This, of course, might change with time and with economical availabilities.

"The value of the street date has changed in recent times. For many

labels, "streeting" an album is not as important as launching a series of singles. For other imprints, the artist's project may release several singles prior to the traditional album street date and generate oodles of streaming activity that translates to revenue. Many consumers are very interested in the body of work the artist will deliver and has in process and will stream the entirety of the project, increasing the stream count for the project just that much more" (Tammy D., Amy Sue M., Clyde Philip R. p 167, 2022).

Ideally, the first track from the EP (the single) will be released in April 2023, but I will start advertising the single around 3 weeks prior to its release date, and will keep doing so after the release.

"Digital offers many advantages, but two of the biggest are being able to finely target the audience and measure the success of promotional campaigns. There are several major components of digital marketing efforts regardless of what product or brand being promoted – paid advertising, website design, search engine marketing and search engine optimisation, email and newsletters, social media, content marketing, online PR, blogs, mobile/texting, web analytics, and optimisation [...] Artists and music companies are using social media to create closer ties to their fans, generate buzz, and drive traffic to their websites for more information or to a streaming site to listen to a track." (Tammy D., Amy Sue M., Clyde Philip R. p 326, 2022)

My main marketing platforms to do so will be Instagram and TikTok, where I will upload videos using the song (or performing part of the song). This will also help me in analysing the audience response while saying money on paid ads, as it's been shown that nearly two-thirds of viral hits on TikTok are fueled by organic posting by the artist and other TikTok users with no spend on advertising or influencers (Dalugdug, M. 2022). In the same period (April 2023) I will record the music video, with a starting budget of £400.

I will advertise the video via Instagram, TikTok and Facebook and I will release it 3 weeks after the single to keep the momentum.

The second single from the EP will be released in June 2023, with its music video following in July. The marketing strategy will be the same as the first single release, although I might use some paid ads depending on the response of my posts. Being active on the different social media platforms not only should boost my audience reach and my music streamings but, also, it should boost my overall followings. In this span of time (April till December) I will also actively look for live performances opportunity to reach a different audience and promote my music.

The EP would be released in August 2023, with its marketing campaign happening 4 weeks before the release till the two months after.

The final goal for 2023 would be to play my headliner show at The Camden Chapel, an acoustic music venue with 40 people capacity, operated by the music agency TalentBanq. The budget of £500 would go towards hiring the venue, hiring the FOH and a session musician.

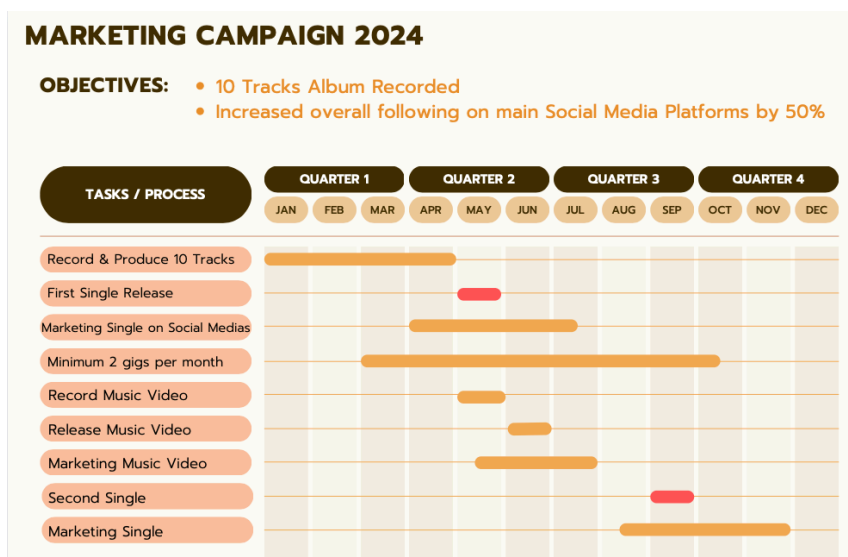
At my live shows, where possible, I will also sell my merchandise (physical EP copies and personalised t-shirts). The merch will also be sold online via Spotify, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook.

Marketing Campaign 2024

For the 2024, the objectives would be to:

- Record a 10 tracks Album;
- Hold an Headliner show in my hometown;
- Keep increasing my overall social media following.

While still looking for opportunities to perform live, I will start recording my 10 tracks from January till April 2024. This time, the budget to record the Album would be £2000. The first single from the Album would be released in May, with the overall marketing strategy similar to the previous year: I will start advertising the new single 3 weeks prior to its release on

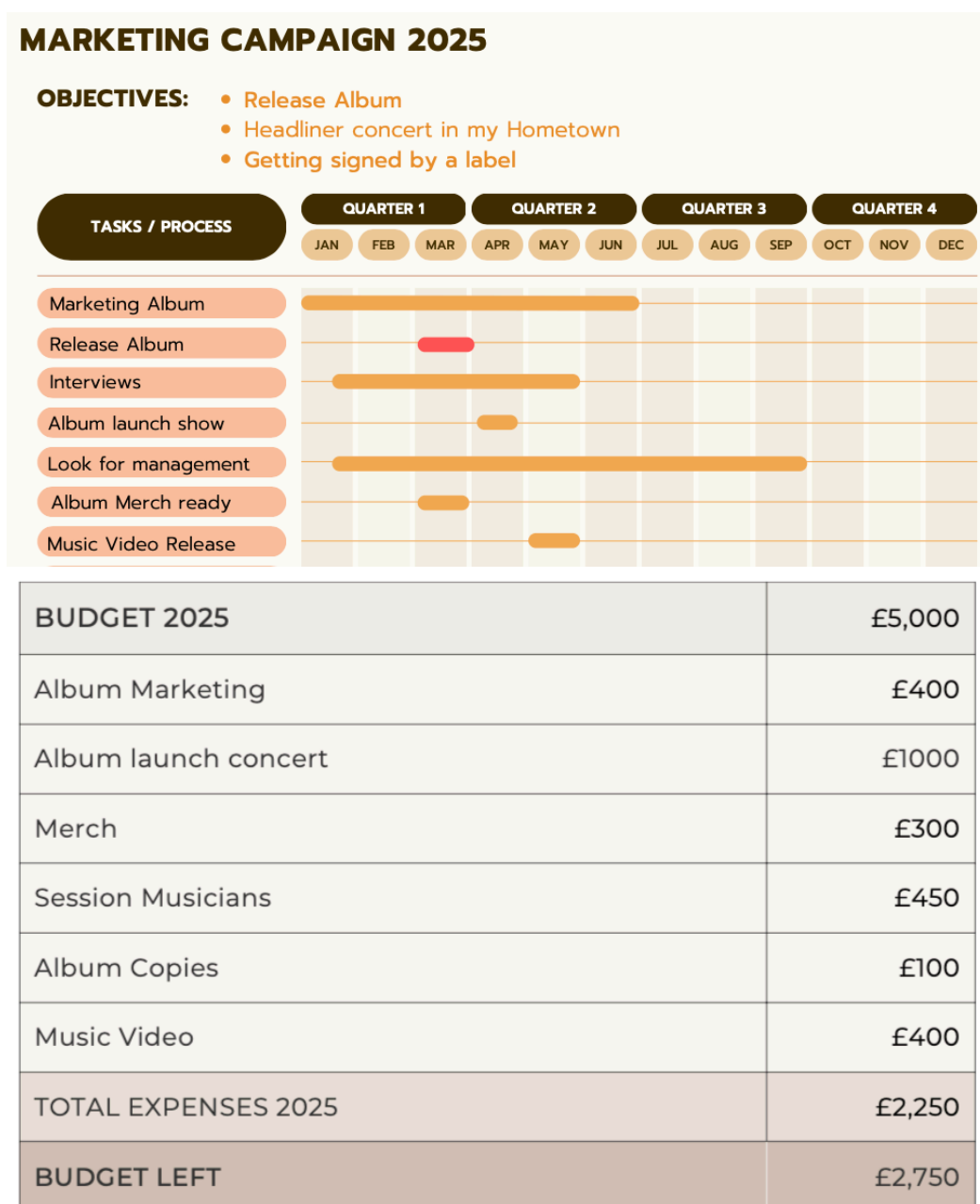


BUDGET 2024	£5,000
Album	£2000
Marketing	£700
Music Videos	£400
Merchandise	£200
TOTAL EXPENSES 2024	£3,300
BUDGET LEFT	£1,700

TikTok, Instagram and Facebook, record a music video in May and release it 3 weeks after the single to keep the momentum while also giving me more advertising material to work with. In the £400 budget for the music videos, I also take in consideration the potential of having to rent an indoor photography space.

The second single from the Album will be released in September, this time without a music video to save on budget for unplanned expenses.

Marketing Campaign 2025



“In more recent years, an important reversal has taken place as recorded music releases nowadays mostly serve to promote concert tours, which, along with merchandise, have become the main source of revenue. From the viewpoint of the audience, live concerts are of special significance as they allow for interaction with the performing artist as well as with other fans.” (Deflem, M p 124, 2017)

The marketing campaign in 2025 will be focused on releasing the 10 tracks album and organising the launch concert in my hometown in Italy.

Although one of the goals is also to get signed by a label and find a management, I won't take these third parties in consideration in my plans as they're not a guarantee.

With the album already recorded and produced, my main focus will be on its advertising in the period going before the release (from January 2025) till 3 months after the release (June 2025).

The marketing for the album will have a budget of £400 to be used where deemed useful and in response to the reactions on the different posts of the social media platforms. In the meantime, I will look for online independent music magazines and blogs to try and obtain an interview to further advertise the upcoming album. The main event after the release of the album will be the show in Italy, at the same venue where I held my previous concert in 2018. Although the budget I set for the concert is of £1000, I will also look for sponsors to help me sustain the expenses. From the previous concert, the total of expenses (venue hire, photographer, videographer, posters, flyers, album copies, musicians, merchandise etc) came at €1,287.

I had a total of €950 from different sponsors, which made my personal expenses go down to a total of €337. From album copies sold, merchandise and show tickets (sold at €5 each), the net gain from the concert was €798. Although prices fluctuate and sells are not granted, by taking the previous expenses in consideration, I can make an estimate of how much I will have to invest for the show in 2025, and how much I could potentially expect to earn.

From the previous expenses of the show in 2018, I'm expecting to require a total of €1,450.

This time I will set a goal to reach at least €1,000 from sponsors, which would leave me with €450 to personally put towards the show. This time, I would set the show tickets at €10 each instead of €5. This would boost my final earnings but, at the same time, I had to take in consideration the risk of less people showing up and buying the ticket. For this reason, I set the tickets sold at 100, compared to the 150 sold at the previous show. With 100 tickets potentially sold, this would mean a gain of €1,000. With these numbers, plus the sale of the merchandise and the album copies, the net gain is expected to be £1,105, which would mean €307 more than the previous show.

If we were to sell 150 concert tickets, the total gain would come up at €1.605, a total difference of €807.

Conclusion

The music industry is ever changing and unpredictable. With the high influence social media has gained in the past few years, and with new ideas and collaborations always coming out, no one can predict for sure how the music industry will evolve.

For this reason, although I tried to stay as close as possible to a likely outcome, three years in music industry standards is a long span of time.

From my researches though, one thing kept coming out when talking about success and audience growth: constancy. Being constant in this industry is what actually makes the difference and what is worth more than the best branding or targeting.

While being constant, you build your audience organically, and you're also building your network, you end up learning more about your self as an artist and what you're final long-term goal really is.

Although there are always exceptions (like Halsey becoming a "over night success" from one Soundcloud upload") we can see from artists such as Lady Gaga that the key was believing in her dream and staying consistent.

When it comes to my marketing strategy, one key for a winning plan will be exactly that: to stay on track, consistency. Everything will be an approach of error and trial, but at the end of it, "one of the best ways to master the art of marketing is to just do it—and to do it for a very long time. There is nothing more valuable in this business, or in life, than experience." (Borg, B. p 341,2020)

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