

Reflective Summary

For the CMM module we were tasked with creating a release plan for the song Keep Me Young by COOL KICKS. Within this we needed to include a budget, a marketing plan, supporting music video and all required artworks and assets. I was chiefly responsible for creating the Marketing Plan with assistance from Ollie Brierly-Jones. As it was something I had little experience with I had to rely on the lectures on the topic to bolster my limited existing knowledge. Over the last two years, prior to accepting my place at Tileyard Education, I worked for a digital live music booking site called Live&Loud. It is a platform that attempts to make it easier for emerging artists and small venues to contact one another and book gigs. During my time there I mainly dealt with liaising with clients and troubleshooting any issues they had with the site or one another. Occasionally this involved helping musicians write their profiles in a manner that marketed themselves better to potential venues, as well as offering them advice on how to improve the social media pages they had linked to their profiles. However, due to the company's size and the nature of any start-up I was also tasked with assisting on other projects such as multiple PR campaigns as well as dealing with email marketing. In my spare time I also, in a very cliched manner, started my own music blog which meant I had to come to terms with Facebook's marketing suite. Whilst all of this is loosely related to formulating a marketing plan for the release of a single, they are all projects that don't sit too far away in terms of the required skill set. Therefore, due to my relative level of parallel experience I decided to put myself forward as being one of those responsible for the marketing campaign. Our team worked well together from the outset and we immediately managed to allocate roles within the first five minutes of our initial meeting. From then on, due to all of us being across the country during the christmas break, we relied on digital platforms in order to collaborate remotely - a point I will discuss later on in this summary.

Perhaps the most useful resource in learning how to set up a marketing plan came in Matthew Justin's lecture on the 11th of December 2019. Within the lecture he covered every aspect of what you want to achieve with a marketing plan, how you can achieve it and the tools you'll need. As a quick aside, I have to be honest with myself and say there are a few lectures that I attend in body, but not in spirit, never because of the quality of the lecture. As a student it can be quite easy to sit at the back of the room and hide. It was usually due to a myriad of reasons, lack of sleep or stress. However Matthew's lecture, and Harry Leckstein's before it, had me

taking more notes than I probably took for the whole course combined. Reinvigorating me to always sit forward and take notice of the invaluable resources that are these guest lecturers. I regretfully remember Harry's advice on the induction day to take advantage of every second at Tileyard Education, because it is all over before you know it. That is something I have to remedy. Matthew Justin's lecture showed me how to format two necessary assets - the marketing plan and a social media content calendar, as well as the importance of different avenues of marketing.

It was Harry's previous lecture and Q&A that provided me with a piece of information that would shape our whole strategy. Print and radio cost money. Specifically to find a good radio plugger would cost upwards of £1000, something well outside of our budget. (Leckstein 2019) Radio has been steadily losing young listeners, 15-24, over the last few years and so to ensure that COOL KICKS would have had radio play on the stations that have retained this audience i.e. the stations that require an expensive plugger. (Farey-Jones 2019) Therefore, I made the executive decision to focus the majority of our marketing budget on online targeted advertising via social media. Matthew's lecture explained that in the UK and European territories much of marketing revolves around what can be consumed online, whereas the US relies heavily on live. (Justin 2019) Therefore we needed to ensure that our social media marketing was tightly planned and engaging. Hence the necessity for a social media content calendar. In this calendar you schedule when exactly you will post and on what social media. For example its best to post on Instagram during the middle of the day and because Instagram is the social media most used by our target demographic, 14-20, we decided to give it that slot compared to Facebook and Twitter. (Jones 2020) Obviously the times in the calendar won't be stringently followed throughout the whole campaign, because after a while you start to see what times your audience most interact and therefore adapt accordingly.

This leads me to perhaps the biggest struggle we faced in terms of setting up a marketing plan. The project we are marketing COOL KICKS had never previously released and original work, with their only release being a remix for Carly and Martina's Counterfeit. Therefore, COOL KICKS don't have an existing audience to market to and so we would have to build their audience from the ground up. Yet another reason to focus on targeted social media advertising. As a result the social media content calendar has to both introduce the single as well as the duo themselves. And so, I decided to target audiences that listen to artists the duo have previously

worked with and chose a small promo video as the first introductory post. I don't expect that the audience will grow that quickly, but we hope that there would be a steady increase as the posts become more personal introducing the duo to the world. If we had a larger budget and perhaps the group had a bit more of a reputation I would have tried to push for some features in online publications, but I don't think that would make much difference in gaining an audience in such a young demographic. One suggestion Ollie made was to use the relationships he has with instagram influencers to point people towards COOL KICK's profiles. The most important relationship being with Carly and Martina who have over 250 thousand followers and for whom COOL KICKS were commissioned to create a remix. One other idea Ollie put forward was to use PlaylistPush to target the song at independent Spotify playlist curators. Ollie's previous experience in releasing his own tracks to a respectable level of success proved invaluable, as he altered the framework I laid out and understood the potential pitfalls we would encounter due to our limited budget, and how to avoid them. This leads me into an earlier point I made about the use of technology to help us work together.

Technological advancements have made it easier than ever to foster a sense of collaboration, no matter how far you are from your team. Whilst it seems quite basic now, the advent of Google Drive and messaging apps, such as whatsapp meant we very rarely had to meet up face to face to get the work done. Obviously, we had in person meetings just to communicate certain points more easily, but the brunt of our team development came via collaborating online. If this were a much larger project we would have most likely utilised software such as Trello, in order to keep an eye on achieving milestones on the project, and if there were more members we perhaps would have used Slack to keep in contact. However, as a team of four with very defined roles we kept mostly to Google Drive. It afforded us the opportunity to check over each others progress as well as ask for help instantly and easily, which proved immensely helpful as my grammar can sometimes be atrocious and was routinely corrected. This was especially useful as the timing of the project came over the christmas period and each member of the team live in different parts of the country. If we didn't have Google Drive to use, the process would have been immeasurably slower, with each file being sent over email, downloaded, changed, sent back, amended etcetera. This also leads me to laud quite a basic platform. WhatsApp, and other similar services, are now becoming an essential tool for teamwork. Many workplaces still rely too heavily on older technologies such as email. For example at Live&Loud, the management, who sat within five metres of their employees, would send emails rather than

verbally update anyone on tasks due. This meant that there would be long stretches of time where employees would not have realised that they were supposed to have shifted their responsibilities. However, when working in a team with members predominantly from the younger generations there is less of a reliance on these older technologies as well as the obstructive processes central to their usage i.e. the formal voice and structure of an email. It also dismantles the air of formality and allows for a stronger sense of team development. By using newer technologies on the whole team morale is increased and the entire process of collaboration is streamlined. (Forbes Development Council 2018) Whilst technology has improved the ability to work well within a team, it's been far more impactful in affecting the ability to create and promote popular music.

You need to look no further than COOL KICKS themselves to see how technology has affected the way in which we can create music. Firstly the advancements in personal computing has allowed us to condense entire studios into our laps. With the rapid advancement in computational power as well as the constant evolution of digital audio workstations the bedroom producer no longer relies on a grainy multi recording tape deck, but can produce work that immediately sounds crisp, professional and radio ready. There is an argument to be made that it has slightly taken the soul out of the creation of music because there are so many tools and plug-ins that fix any inconsistencies in one's ability to play an instrument or sing. For example, the ability to quantize your melody so that it fits perfectly to the underlying beat makes music sound a touch more robotic. Popular YouTube music journalist Rick Beato released a video quantizing John Bonham's drum playing and argued that it took away any sense of humanity from the drumming. (Beato 2019) Although I understand the argument, it ignores the fact that many of these 'bedroom producers' lack the initial ability to source and record live instrumentation. It allows them the opportunity to start their career from the bedroom and later on in life, following some success, use session musicians. Another such way that technology has influenced the creation of music is again via collaboration. COOL KICKS as a duo live miles apart, Ollie lives in London, whereas Nino lives in Phoenix. Technology affords them the ability to send beats, melodies, bass lines etc. over the internet and to collaborate on a song without the necessity for proximity.

It is not solely in the production of music that technology has disrupted the music industry, but also in the ability to promote material and engage with fans. This is evidenced by the strategies

we decided to use for our marketing plan. Social media as a whole has given fans front row access to the musicians they follow. Before the advent of social media, fans would have to rely on reports from music publications or mailing lists to hear any developments. Whereas now they can follow their Instagram and most likely see daily posts. This works both ways, the fans can get updates, but musicians can market new tracks, gigs or merchandise almost instantly. Couple this with software such as Facebook marketing Suite, and the ability to advertise to current or potential fans has increased exponentially. It has made the job of the marketer both easier and far more engaged. There are now so many more streams of marketing than there were previously and due to the instantaneous nature of social media, the job of the marketing teams is to ensure a continuous release of content on social media platforms. Another advancement that has impacted the music world far beyond just the promotion of releases are streaming platforms. The manner in which fans consume music has changed beyond recognition. Whilst it has been far overplayed, the importance of an album has waned in comparison to that of a single. (Owinski 2018) Singles have far more cultural capital in that musicians now choose to listen to self or professionally curated playlists of multiple different artists rather than full length albums. Therefore it is now a major marketing strategy to ensure that your, or your clients, track gets placed in one of these playlists. Getting on Spotify's New Music Friday is just as, if not more, important than finding a reputable plugger to get your song on the radio, especially when marketing for the younger demographics.

My time working on this project pushed me to look at the industry not as a whole, but focused on the mechanics of music marketing. Whilst I still have a lot to learn, the ability to put to use the techniques put forward by Matthew Justin and Harry Leckstein provided me with invaluable experience. The industry is ever changing and it is almost a certainty that within a few years there will be new strategies to ensure the release you are working on garners the audience it deserves. Therefore, by looking at what works with the current strategies I am best placed to pick up on the slight and necessary advancements.

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