

Entertainment Marketing Report

Module Code: SBTY7003

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Introduction

This report is a marketing plan for the debut album and supporting singles of the young independent London based band, Black Country, New Road. Initially I wanted to base my marketing strategies on the 7 P's of Marketing. However, for the purposes of entertainment marketing the 7 P's can be seen to be focused too much on the product. (Lauterborn 1990). Therefore I thought it best to mainly refer to the 4 C's model put forward by Leiberman and Esgat (2002); namely Content, Conduit, Consumption and Convergence. Whilst that built the framework in terms of my understanding of the marketing principles, the report itself is modelled on those shown to me by Tim Ferrone (2020) during my lectures at Tileyard Education.

Summary

Black Country, New Road are an independent seven piece based in London. Their style could predominantly be described as post-punk, however in an era where we celebrate a sense of fluidity between genres it would be difficult to describe them as just that. In terms of which playlists we would aim to place them on, we would focus our efforts around those that lean towards a more avant-garde post-punk style. Yet due to the modern day music fan not being as blinkered as in the past, there are many opportunities to give Black Country, New Road a platform to be heard by those who usually wouldn't come across them.

The band are made up mostly by ex-members of the extremely well regarded and hyped group Nervous Conditions. They broke up in 2018 after the original lead singer was accused of sexual assault and the rest of the members thought it untenable to continue a professional and personal relationship with him. Within a few months Black Country, New Road were formed out of the ashes with Isaac Wood taking over the role of singer and the band focusing more on forming tightly crafted songs. Although you would be forgiven for not hearing a more focused sound as the majority of their tracks stretch past the 6 minute mark.

They have found nascent success by extensive gigging at The Windmill in Brixton due to initial support from in house booker, Tim Perry. Through this support they gained a good amount of immediate attention as resulting in Speedy Wunderground, a label run by the now legendary producer Dan Carey, releasing their first single and assisting with the release of their second. It's via these connections that they have been 'validated' in the eyes of a notoriously judgemental audience and have therefore seen a quite steady rise in their fanbase.

Past Highlights

Black Country, New Road have only been releasing music since 2019 and due to their position as a young new band, their back catalogue is very limited. However, even with only two releases to their name and a single UK tour, they have provided themselves with a base for promising potential growth.

Releases:

- *Athens, France*
 - Streams: 430,000+ Spotify streams. (Spotify, 2020)
 - Information: *Athens, France* was released on Speedy Wunderground, a label set up by Dan Carey. All releases on Speedy Wunderground are recorded in a day in Carey's personal studio. The label has full creative control over the release's imagery as every track on the label becomes part of a collection released at points throughout the year. While this takes away the opportunity for an artist releasing on the label to have a sense of individuality, it provides them with a reputation boost as Speedy Wunderground collections have now become a prestigious release to feature on.
- *Sunglasses*
 - Streams: 620,000+ / 810,000+ Spotify streams, if including the radio edit. (Spotify, 2020)
 - Music Video: 102,000+ streams on YouTube. (YouTube, 2020) *Sunglasses* is their first music video, produced on a minimal budget. The video is a collection of nondescript stills from American home movies put to the music. The release of the video coincided with the creation of their social media accounts and was the first time that any imagery had been connected to the band.
 - Information: *Sunglasses* was released independently with the assistance of Speedy Wunderground. The release was supported by a limited run of hand made record sleeves to house vinyls that were sold for £10 each via Blank Editions. The vinyl was repressed twice with each run being limited to ~250. They all sold out extremely quickly. (Bandcamp, 2020)

Live:

- 2 x UK Sold out tours
 - Black Country, New Road have played two sold out tours of small cap venues across the UK, including Manchester, Brighton, Edinburgh, Bristol and Leeds. Their last tour culminated in playing, and selling out, Village Underground.
- BBC 6 Music Festival
 - The set was filmed professionally and is available on BBC's website.

Marketing overview

As we can see with the numbers above, Black Country, New Road have had an immediately successful start to their career, with minimal marketing. As well as achieving an incredibly respectable amount of streams for their first two singles, 1,240,000+ combined streams on Spotify, they have started to be featured in a few reputable publications. Kitty Empire of The Observer named them her artist of the week in January of this year. (Empire, 2020). A good

level of hype is building around them and we want to enhance that whilst making the increase in marketing seem natural. The group has shown a remarkable ability to attract fans via word of mouth and gigging, so we can expect to win over further fans with a more focused strategy that remains consistent to how they have originally presented themselves.

While they are showing a steady increase in their streams, their current follower base on social media is left wanting at best. This is why we are looking to adjust their branding, something I will touch upon later on in the report.

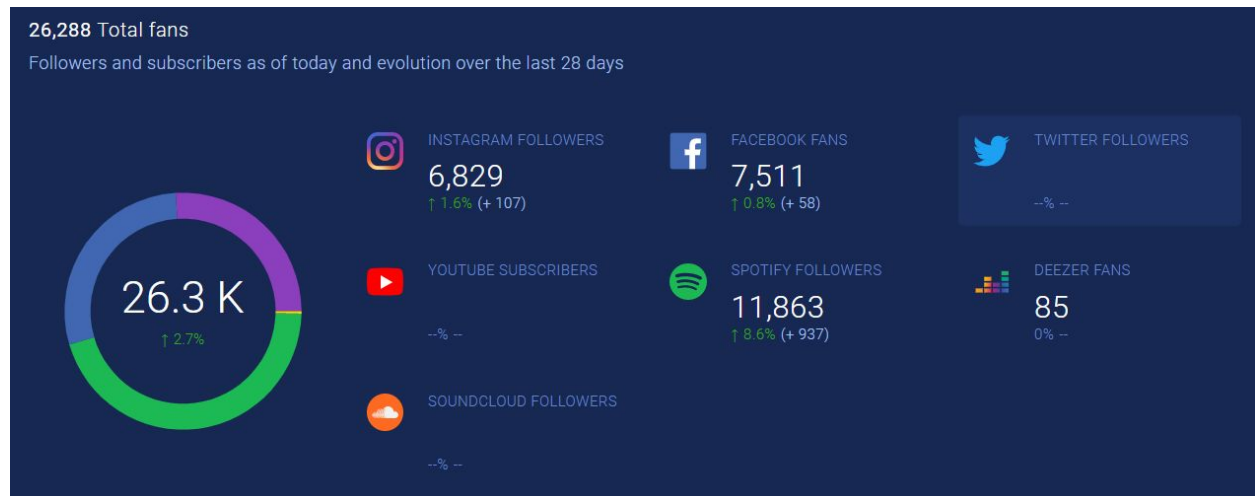


Fig 1. Soundcharts Black Country, New Road total fans. (Soundcharts, 2020)

The limited number of current followers is nothing to be alarmed about, it more provides us with the chance for a lot of immediate upward movement. If we are to look at the most popular comparable band of the moment, Black Midi, their total fans amount to 131,363 (Soundchart, 2020). This provides us with a realistic target number to aim for towards the end of the album release cycle and the concurrent marketing campaign.

One issue we have seen is that their current monthly listeners are starting to dwindle, mainly as a result of their slow output of releases. Therefore, we will encourage the band to release a first single for their debut album as soon as possible to reinvigorate their listener base. We originally saw this campaign only having space for one lead single prior to the album release, but the current Covid-19 crisis means that part of our strategy will have to be delayed until the beginning of next year.



Fig 2. Soundcharts Daily evolution of month listeners. (Soundcharts, 2020)

Strategy & Timeline

As mentioned, the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted our ability to roll out this marketing campaign in the timeline we had originally hoped for. The plan was to release the album towards the end of the summer so that the band could embark on a UK and European tour following their performances during the festival season - an important part of gaining fans. However, firstly, the band will find it difficult to record until the lockdown measures are lessened, secondly, the majority of festivals have been cancelled and thirdly, one of the major moments of our campaign involves filming a video in public. Therefore, the band has to release a single in the meantime and we have had to reorganise the entire timeline - which you can see below.

Action	Date	Notes
Emergency Single Release - <i>Snowglobes</i>	July 2020	Accompanying video and major push for radio play of the Edit.
Lead Single Release - <i>Basketball Shoes</i>	February 2021 (2 months before release)	Accompanying video and major push for radio play of the Edit.
Live video of <i>Sunglasses</i>	March 2021 (1 month before album release)	
Album Release	April 2021	Huge push towards press for reviews.
UK Tour	May 2021	Tour in support of the album

Festival Circuit	June - August 2021	Major festivals on the European and UK circuit
European Tour	October 2021	

Fig 3. Release Strategy Timeline

Snowglobes

Due to the current pandemic much of the marketing behind *Snowglobes* may be constrained by the restrictive measures placed upon the nation. Therefore our efforts will focus mostly on social media advertising, online press/blos, as well as hiring a plugger to push for the single to be played on the relevant stations. I will go into further detail regarding our strategy for ensuring the band gets noticed by the right people later on in this report. In terms of content creation the band can release another video similar to that of *Sunglasses*, just with the pictures being of life in more snowy locales. One benefit of doing this, is the video will be extremely low budget and can be done remotely by a video editor within a matter of hours. It may seem unimaginative to follow on from their previous video, but it is imperative to keep the imagery consistent.

The previous video for *Sunglasses*, is a collection of very normal non descript stills and images from american home movies that play over the music (see below). It is an attempt to juxtapose the american dream and commercialisation with the band's lyrical social commentary that dismantles current pervasive cultural trends. It all sounds very pretentious, but it's a theme that is central to their music and therefore needs to be continuous throughout the campaign.



Fig 4. Stills from *Sunglasses* music video. (YouTube, 2019)

Basketball Shoes

The start of the original and more focused release schedule will begin early next year when hopefully the world will be coming out of this crisis. There should be more certainty as to whether artists can tour or not. We will push the single *Basketball Shoes*, which is the first track to play with ideas of love rather than biting social commentary and so we want to lean into the 'normal' imagery and make it quite kitsch. The video will be scenes and clips from straight to video terrible american high school films and their prom scenes. We would rather use more culturally significant films, however the rights to use such clips may be way outside of our budget. Again the creation of such a video will be time and cost effective, relying on solely an editor to piece together the clips and the music. The aesthetic of the high school prom will be the most consistent use of imagery from this point forward and it will hopefully give the audience a more focused theme to follow along with. As with *Snowglobes*, we will push for radio play, online press/blogs and have a continued social media advertising campaign to support the release of the single.



Fig 5. Stills from famous american films to serve as inspiration for *Basketball Shoes* Video.

Live video for *Sunglasses*

We aim for the live video for *Sunglasses* to be the tipping point in regards to the album release schedule, apart from the release itself. The idea for the video is to have the band dressed in tuxedos and gowns walking in public through Victoria Park in Hackney followed by a marching band, inspiration for this comes from Radiohead's 2009 performance at The Grammys. The video will end with Isaac, the lead singer walking up to the lead camera operator and handing them a handwritten prom invitation with the date of the album release written at the bottom. We

hope that it is the sort of stunt that might create a viral video, at least in the niche audience we are aiming for. It may be odd to be doing this for a song released earlier on in their career, but the artwork for the single is of an American marching band, which has now become iconic amongst their fans.

Album Release

The album will be released one month following the live video stunt. It is normal to provide a release date further in advance, however the band are one that are already surrounded by hype. Therefore, we think a month offers both enough time to allow for some excitement to build whilst also offering the original fans a feeling of it being a surprise release. As we will look at later on in this report, many of the fans of bands like Black Country, New Road like to believe they are part of an elite club and are therefore extremely loyal. And so, it's beneficial to reward their loyalty and patience by having a quick turn around between album announcement and release.

In the month leading up to the release we will offer fans the chance to order handmade limited edition records. There was previous success with this tactic back when they released *Sunglasses*, and it is monetarily beneficial to offer such a product as you can overcharge and fully expect to sell out. We think it would be best to limit the run to 1000 records sold at £25 each. The record will be housed in a gatefold sleeve, with the centre containing pictures of the band as if they were in a yearbook. Each picture will be captioned with the typical 'most likely to..', written by the band themselves in a hopefully humorous/referential manner.

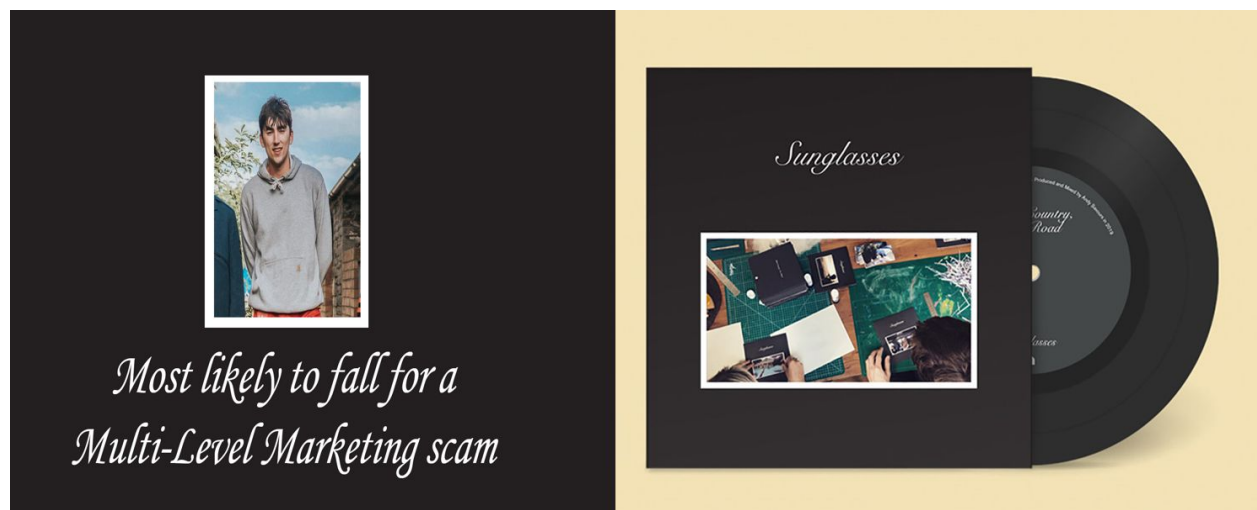


Fig 6. Example of inside of handmade sleeve and previous sleeve for *Sunglasses*.

Following this there will be normal release of vinyls. There will be a major push towards physical album sales. In recent years the UK has seen a marked increase in Vinyl sales and it is important to take advantage of that monetarily. The band serves to make a lot more money if

they can take a good percentage of physical sales and luckily, the demographic/psychographic that we are aiming for are one that prefers to own a physical copy.

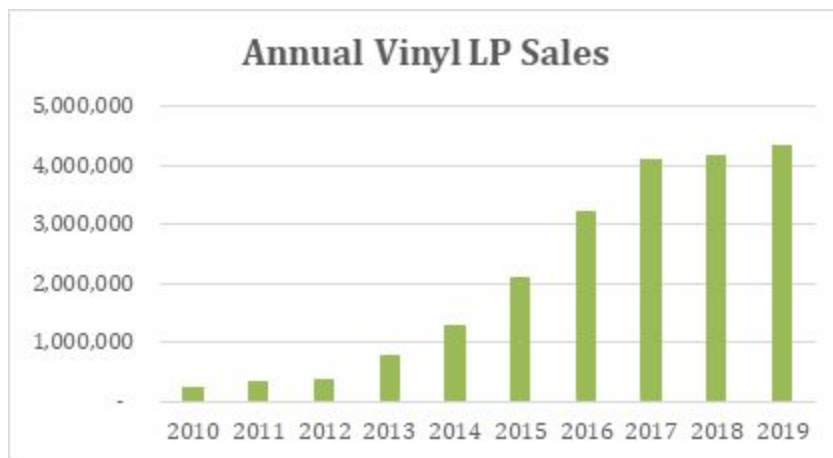


Fig 7. Annual Vinyl LP Sales. (BPI 2020)

Tour

To support the release of the album, Black Country, New Road will perform at the Windmill in Brixton, with the opportunity to buy tickets being offered as part of an album pre-sale. This is a technique now used by many bands, and whilst not everyone who pre-orders the album manages to get a ticket, they do all provide their email address, which gives us an address book for future marketing efforts, such as the announcement of a live tour. An amateur video will be shot by Lou Smith, a tastemaker on YouTube who's amateur live recordings of full concerts reach around 40k views. In the month following the album release the band will embark on a small to mid-cap venue tour of the UK with the assistance of promoters such as Bird on the Wire.

One of the only benefits of Covid-19 postponing the album release schedule, is that the band will have a chance to tour their album on the festival circuit across Europe, thereby gaining a European fanbase. This will allow them to embark on a meaningful Europeans tour, rather than the usual first tour that focuses on building an initial fanbase.

Media

Our initial strategy in attaining media coverage will be to target the tastemakers, most of whom exist on radio and online. It is important that a majority of our target audience first hear of the band via voices they perceive as 'cool'. Following this, we hope to get interviews and reviews featured in some mainstream print newspapers..

Online:

- The Quietus (already ran an interview in the past)

- Noisey
- Consequence of Sound
- The Fader
- DREAM SCENARIO: Anthony Fantano - he reviews the occasional avant garde english band and did review Black Midi, so it's not an impossible dream.

Radio:

For radio we will employ the services of reputable pluggers. Tim taught us to try and use innovative ways to get producers to listen to the music and so for *Snowglobes*, we imagine sending in a snow globe with a USB attached to the bottom. While for *Basketball Shoes*, we foresee sending a corsage along with a handwritten note telling them to check their emails, which will include a link to the song. (Ferrone, 2020)

- Radio 6 - Attempt to contact: Abbie McCarthy, Al Booth, Jeff Smith and Giles Peterson.
- NTS - I have a personal friend who works there.
- YAM radio
- Foundation FM

Playlists:

- Postpunk 2k - 21k followers
- Counter - 14k followers
- The Punk List - 19k followers
- Counter - 15k followers

Press:

- The Guardian (previous live review, therefore a link to follow)
- The Times (previous live review, therefore a link to follow)
- Metro / Evening Standard etc.

Mercury Prize:

This is perhaps the most unrealistic of goals, but it is not without any foundation. Black Midi, a band whose early career draws many parallels, were nominated for the 2019 prize. Therefore it is not outside of the realms of possibility to get a nomination. Black Country, New Road can be classified as Mercury bait, fulfilling the usual spot of a young 'token avant garde act'. (Guardian 20..) With our attempts to plug the band onto BBC 6 Music as well as them having performed at the BBC 6 Music festival, we can be almost certain that they will be on Jeff Smith's radar, the head of the awards panel. We will also make sure to pitch the band to Tshepo Mokoena, the editorial director of Vice.com, Will Hodgkinson, the chief rock and pop critic for The Times, and Harriet Gibsone, the deputy Editor of The Guardian Guide. All of whom have been on the panel multiple times. The most we can hope for is sending, as with the pluggers, a corsage and limited edition vinyl to each relevant member of the panel, and hope that they listen to and like the album.

Project Plan

Week	Week Ending	Release / Production / Announcements	Live Activity	Promo/Marketing Activity
-42	June 28th	Asset creation for video and imagery of first single		
-41	July 5th			Plug single to tastemakers
-40	July 12th	First single release <i>Snowglobes</i>		Social media advertising campaign
-11	January 31st	Asset creation for video and imagery of second single		
-10	February 7th	Begin production of handmade vinyls		Plug single to tastemakers
-9	February 14th	Second single release <i>Basketball Shoes</i>		Social media advertising campaign
-8	February 21st	Film live video for <i>Sunglasses</i>		
-6	March 7th			Send video to Quietus to premiere
-5	March 14th	Live video release / Album release date announcement/ Presale announcement		Social media advertising campaign Beginning of national media campaign
0	April 18th	Album release date / Live tour announcement	Windmill Show	Social media advertising
+1	April 25th	UK Tour announcement		Regional radio and publications campaign
+3-5	May 16th-30th		UK Tour	
+6-22	June 6th - September 19th		Festival Circuit	
+23	September 26th	European Tour Announcement		European radio and publication campaign
+26-28	October 17th-31st		European Tour	

Fig 8. Marketing Project Plan (all dates estimates dependent on progression of Covid Crisis)

Target Market

To work out Black Country, New Road's we would need access to their Facebook analytics as well as those of bands of a similar type, such as Black Midi and Squid. However, Tim Ferrone said in one of his lectures that it is as important to just trust your gut as well as the data. (Ferrone, 2020) Therefore to work out the target audience's demographic and psychographics in relation to the segmentation set out by MBA Skool, I will have to use anecdotal evidence such as the observations I have made at gigs that I have attended. (MBA Skool, 2019).

Demographic

- All Genders
- Urban centres
- Graduates (Humanities or Arts)
- 20-35
- Mid-income
- Creative jobs
- Caucasian

Psychographic

- Highly Social
- 'Woke' / Political
- Literary
- Interest in fashion and art
- Read music blogs
- Long attention span
- Instagram users NOT Facebook
- Record collectors or prefers physical media

Branding and Brand Development

As previously stated up until now Black Country, New Road have remained relatively mysterious on social media. Although they don't shy away from media appearances, doing the occasional written and filmed interview. However, because of their previous inclination of not presenting themselves on their socials, the best course of action is to gradually and subtly introduce them onto their feeds - especially Instagram. Up until now their Instagram feed has been littered with generic pictures of American life, akin to what was shown in their music video for Sunglasses. And so, to keep the aesthetic consistent, the band should be encouraged to post the occasional candid shots from their own life until the feed is populated with shots of only them. Most, if not all, posts should retain an amateur feel to them - this allows the band themselves to post content daily for no cost. Posting content daily is an important way to keep fans engaged. (Keuhnelian, 2017)

Part of what makes this band appealing is that they don't come across as if they are putting on airs. By focusing the content into being a pictorial documentary of what their life is like behind the scenes, the idea of their 'normality' is compounded. Thereby justifying their position to critique normal life as normal people. The majority of their songs are littered with cultural references that easily could come across as forced and so it's important that the audience, who we have already seen as a cynical type, trust that the band are legitimate. This tactic also feeds into the idea of the audience being part of a special club by being fans of Black Country, New Road. Following their socials gives them the chance to join along for the ride and inherently buy into wanting Black Country, New Road to succeed. Also by keeping the branding and social media content understated, the band are perceived as moderately secret in the eyes of the target market. This is a strategy we saw work with Black Midi who originally shied away from all social media at the beginning of their career, instead relying on word of mouth to inspire a sense of hype for a band who would only announce gigs within a few hours notice. (Smile End, 2019)

In regards to their single and album imagery we want to continue along the path they set with their video for *Sunglasses*, and so each release will follow along with a singular image on a black background topped by the same white font.



Fig 9. Record covers

Budget

Throughout the formation of this entire campaign we have had to keep in mind that Black Country, New Road are currently an independent 7 piece band. Therefore we need to ensure that the budget is pretty much on a shoestring. The only incomings we can truly account for is the sale of the limited edition vinyls. We strongly recommend that they be limited to a run of 1000 to ensure they remain 'special'. All vinyl sales after that are up to the band.

Item	Cost (£)	Notes	Reference
Pluggier	-2000		(Leckstein, 2019)
Vinyl Pressing	-3620		(Key production, 2020)
Video Editor	-660	Music videos & Live video: £30/hour 22 hours total	
Marching Band	-4000	£800/day, needed for 5 days to rehearse and shoot	(Encore Musicians, 2020)
Camera Operators	-750	£50/hour 3 needed for 5 hours	(London Video Camera Hire, 2020)
Social Media Advertising	-750	£250/month	
Vinyl Sales	+25000	1000 sales at £25 each	
TOTAL	£13220		

Fig 10. Budget

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