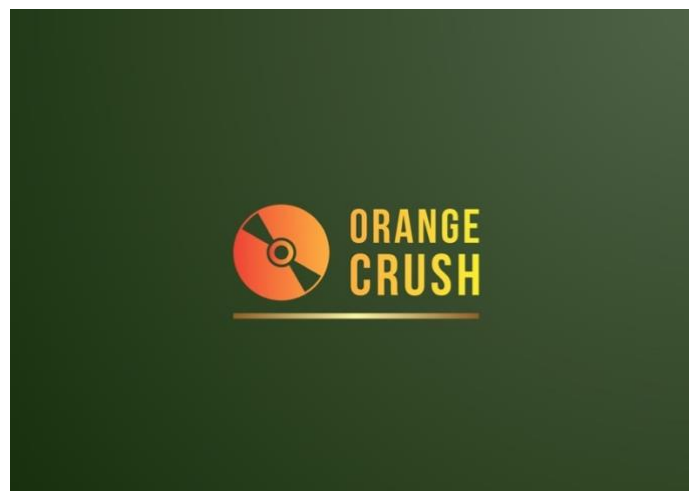
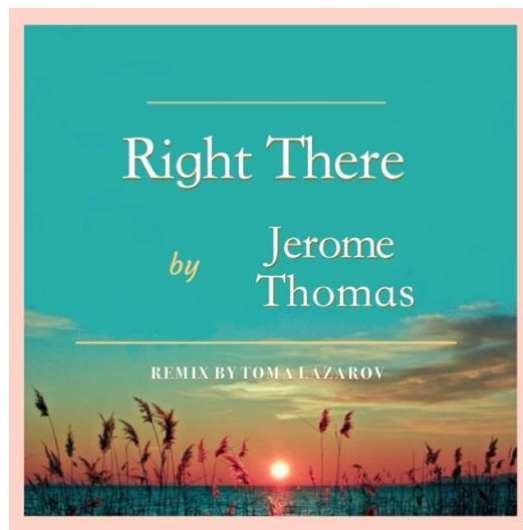


CHRISTIAN GILLETT
REFLECTIVE ESSAY
ORANGE CRUSH GROUP
CREATIVE MUSIC MANAGEMENT



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ABSTRACT

The following text reflects on and analyses the processes involved in a single release campaign created and implemented by Orange Crush, a four-person group designated by Tileyard Education. The essay defines the importance of reflective summaries and discusses the relevance of team management, contracts, marketing, social media and budgeting with a commercial music release.

REFLECTIVE SUMMARY

What is a Reflective Summary and why is it important?

A reflective summary is a critical analysis of a previous event or project in order to learn from these experiences, with the aim to apply this newfound knowledge in future projects (Middlesex University, n.d.). An effective reflective summary shouldn't simply be a diary-like entry of tasks and activities, but reflecting on the outcomes of these actions, considering what was learnt, acknowledging what aspects were successful and what could have been done differently (Skills You Need, n.d.). In his 2002 journal, 'Effective Reflective Practice: In Search of Meaning in Learning About Teaching', J. John Loughran (2002) states:

The relationship between time, experience, and expectations of learning through reflection is an important element of reflection, and to teach about reflection requires contextual anchors to make learning episodes meaningful.

Although Loughran's account specifically targets reflective practice within the teaching realm, it can be easily applied to other mediums. Furthermore, according to the *Skills You Need* blog, reflection can be developed into a beneficial skill, such as improving emotional intelligence, creative thinking and active participation in group projects.

The Assignment

First Steps – Team Management

For the Creative Music Management assignment, our objective was to strategize and implement a single release campaign for an aspiring artist utilising a limited budget. The Music Business cohort were delegated into teams of four, and I was partnered with Aston New, Caitlin Skea and Alexandru Oprisanu. This group was allocated the name Orange Crush, so we adopted this identity to act in the form of an independent record label.

It is interesting to note that none of us took a leading management role. This taps into the theory that creative thinkers, like ourselves, are inclined to resent control or being ordered to complete tasks. Rather, creatives tend to value independence, unorthodox methods of working and thrive on exploration (Davis & Scase, 2000, p. viii). Because of this, job roles can be less defined in creative companies, while managerial positions are understated as creatives rarely have aspirations to manage other people. This is also imperative to creative employee's motivation (Davis & Scase, 2000, p. 13, 148). However, because of this 'leaderless' framework, no member of the team enforced strict deadlines for our individual and group tasks, proving detrimental in the latter stages of the assignment.

Task Delegation

In our initial group conference call, we examined the various aspects of the assignment's criteria while discussing our individual strengths and weaknesses in relation to finance, graphic design, videography and writing skills. In this session, I took responsibility for drafting up contracts, writing a press release and assisting in overseeing the budget, collaborating with Alexandru. Aston and Caitlin gravitated towards more creative-led tasks such as video content for social media, while collectively contributing towards creating an Electronic Press Kit for the artist and release. I believe this was the correct course of action as we mutually sought to begin the project utilising our pre-existing skills, leading with confidence in our abilities and contributions to the team dynamic. However, on reflection, I believe that each of us should have also attempted to take on objectives outside our established skillset for

the opportunity for new experiences and personal growth. For instance, I could have attempted to create a video asset for social media use.

We tasked ourselves to find and pitch artists or producers to each other, either from within the Tileyard community or artists we had previously established relationships with. A deadline was established for the following week where we would hold an “A&R session” online. We collated six potential acts to work with, before unanimously connecting with Aston New’s contact Jerome Thomas, whose new track ‘Right There’ was ultimately decided for use in the campaign. Our second choice was a track produced by Toma Lazarov, a Tileyard Education student on the Music Production MA course, and associate of Caitlin from her previous University. We believed his production style would make for an engaging remix of Jerome’s single. The A&R style session worked well, although the genres of the acts pitched were extremely broad. If we were to undertake this project again, I believe it would be beneficial to have set out more specific directives when scouting for possible acts to run a campaign for.

After finalising Jerome Thomas’ track to promote and hiring Toma Lazarov to produce the remix, we scheduled a video conference call with both artist and producer involved. This was to establish a relationship between both parties, forming connections amongst the group to provide fluid conversations throughout the campaign process when required. This was essential before Toma began the remix so there would be clear discussion and instruction on how we collectively envisaged the remix sounding. Everyone felt passionate about maintaining the ‘feel’ of the original song – predominantly the chorus, with Toma focussing on replacing instrumental elements for more electronic led production styles and rhythms, potentially adding extra parts by collaborating together with Jerome in the studio.

From here on, Orange Crush scheduled weekly video conference calls to strategize the campaign, exchange ideas and update each other on progress throughout the process. Alongside this, we set up a WhatsApp group so we could message in between conference calls and also opened a group account on the Israel-based project management site *Monday.com*. An issue we ran into with this software was after one of us paid for a subscription to the site, we soon discovered that all members were required to pay individual subscription fees to access, edit and upload files. Since this would be factored into our budget, we decided to write the initial cost

off, switching to Google Drive instead where we could effectively collate all our content and assets in a similar fashion.

Contracts

My first tasks were to produce a Song Brief based on the initial video call discussions, alongside a Remix Agreement between all respective parties and Photo Release Forms in order to be assigned the rights to exploit professional photographs when marketing the campaign.

A song brief should deliver precise directives for a producer or songwriter in order to reach a specified criterion, ultimately for the song to appeal to a targeted demographic (Simmons & Conesa, 2017). In creating the Song Brief, I referred to two blogs (Little Black Book and Audiodraft) on how to format and style a song brief, as well as using Tileyard Education's weekly 'Brief of the Week' email correspondence with alumni as a third reference. These proved useful in how I structured the brief, with the assurance of all the relevant information being included. I found creating the song brief to be beneficial as it clearly documented the agreed objectives for the remix official and made these notes accessible to the team. In evaluation, one critique would be the overly broad styles of the reference tracks provided. More time should have been expended collating a more unified set of examples.

For the remix agreement, I located a PDF template online at *Music Austria* for free download. I used this template as a guide to draft up our own agreement on behalf of Orange Crush between the label, artist and producer. I selected the aspects of the PDF which I felt were necessary in this instance, rewording where necessary and discarding sections deemed irrelevant to this project. I then uploaded for my colleagues to evaluate and welcomed any feedback or input to the contract regarding additions or changes.

A similar approach was taken when acquiring the rights to use the press photos of Jerome and Toma for the Press Release and Electronic Press Kit (EPK) by creating a Photo Release Form. Again, I found a resource online, this time through *docsketch* – a contract-based website that allows users to create and electronically sign legal documents. This site was easy to navigate, and prior to the internet's almost limitless resources, would have been far more challenging, time-consuming and expensive (through hiring a lawyer) to create and form a legally binding document. While this

method undoubtedly saved on expenses as intended, it ultimately caused a branding disparity through lack of cohesion. Most press photos were monochrome, while the single's artwork centred around bright, vivid colours.

While I created these contracts, other team members started working on artwork-based assets and gathering information from Jerome in order to build a press kit later in the process.

Marketing Strategy

In his 2008 book 'Tribes', Seth Godin discusses the importance of storytelling to sell and spread creations as a key concept to marketing (Godin, 2008), whereas the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) succinctly describes marketing as:

The Management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably (CIM, 2015).

A marketing strategy is a vital aspect for any business as it allows for planning, identifying desired outcomes and how these can be achieved. It is also useful for establishing what methods are successful or unsuccessful, so that we can utilise them again for future campaigns.

In his 2009 book *Music Marketing – Press, Promotion, Digital & Retail*, Mike King defines the concept of integrated music marketing as all facets of a campaign functioning in unison to create and build visibility and awareness, rather than these aspects being isolated. This would involve live shows, merchandise, press, radio and distribution, among others (King, 2009). Due to the limited budget available, and the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic essentially putting any performances or tours on hold for the foreseeable future, we had to eradicate the reliance of live shows or merchandise to generate revenue, primarily channelling all available funds into marketing the songs through press, radio and playlists. Therefore cost-saving exercises where we could utilise our own creative skills to produce as much content as possible, or use pre-existing assets like photos, were implemented. This was a direct influence on us deciding to create our own release forms for use of photos from Jerome Thomas' photographer instead of hiring a photographer for a new shoot, and

drafting up a remix contract with Toma Lazarov, negotiating a royalty split deal rather than a flat fee payment.

King also highlights the importance of finding a niche, starting locally to build a following, expanding this niche and developing to a globally facing model. As the artist had already established a decent-sized fanbase, and in particular a high number of followers on Instagram, we opted to focus a lot of our attention on utilizing platforms on the internet, using the remix to reach a wider audience. These choices allowed us to allocate a more substantial portion of the budget to hiring a professional PR company (we approached Hart Media from Tileyard), reach out to blogs and playlists via MusoSoup and SubmitHub (two pitching websites specifically for playlists, internet radio and music blogs), and investing in targeted advertisements through Instagram. Similarly, with Jerome already having gained airplay on BBC Radio 1Xtra, the team decided to focus our marketing intentions solely on the remix to emphasise the core goal of reaching a wider demographic.

Focussing on creating interactive fan engagement in the lead up to the single, we hoped this would assist in generating streams without too much expense from the label. For this, I created a series of 'hangman'-style games using the singles' initial draft artwork as a backdrop. Each new asset reveals a new letter of the track name, with the hope it will inspire fans to comment on the posts, guessing the track's title. Consequently, our marketing strategy allows us to appeal to a new market, without neglecting his pre-existing fanbase. The inspiration for these assets came from an unsigned artist, Jasmine Kelly, who asked for her followers to speculate the title of a new single through Instagram Stories, with one of the assets being a hangman game after guesses from the cryptic artwork were getting closer to the correct answer. As I utilised an earlier draft of the single artwork rather than the finalised product, it could be argued that this contributed to the group encountering further branding discrepancies between the aforementioned press photos and artwork.

Budgeting

Raj (2004) states, *"the budgeting process provides managers with the opportunity to carefully match the goals of the organization with the resources necessary to accomplish those goals."*

While much of our financial expenditure was weighted on promoting the remix professionally, another key aim was to create fan engagement for the original single release. Having analysed Jerome's previous reception on Spotify, his ten most popular songs generated an average stream count of approximately 230,000. This equates to just over £1000 in royalties. After researching costs of online distributors, we settled on using AWAL, as there is no upload fee compared to other distributors, who either charged a one-off fee or a yearly amount to keep a track, EP or album on the streaming services. AWAL would in turn take a 15% cut of the royalties, thus the target 230,000 streams would equate to approximately £860 after AWAL's 15% is deducted. It should be noted that we only calculated streams from Spotify, so we would anticipate further streams on other services such as AppleMusic, TIDAL and Deezer – all of which pay a higher royalty per stream (Sanchez, 2019).

Although the royalties from the single would likely recoup the budget invested into the campaign, it is never guaranteed. Trying to capitalise on monetising through social media channels in response to the lack of performance opportunities due to COVID-19, we scheduled a ticketed live-stream acoustic performance by Jerome following the release. We hypothesized that if Jerome could appeal to at least 60 of his fans to purchase a £5 ticket, that would recoup almost two-thirds of the entire budget, with no set-up costs. Using Eventbrite to distribute tickets and provide private links, a fee is incurred, therefore 75 ticket sales would be required to surpass the same £300 revenue target. Combining the social media assets with the concert announcement, and to encourage fan participation, Jerome will offer five free tickets to the livestream to the first five participants with correct answers to the teasers and who share the post to their own Instagram stories.

Aston and Caitlin were responsible for creating the behind-the-scenes video by interviewing with Jerome and Toma. Although we were satisfied with the content's outcome, the endeavour had become stressful for them given the lockdown restrictions limited their accessibility to operate together. On reflection, it could have been beneficial to source a freelance professional videographer, or similarly, employed RotorVideo – an Artificial Intelligence website based at Tileyard that creates video content to aesthetically match the music uploaded to the website's interface. It is relatively cheap with a rapid turnaround, so given the current circumstances, this likely would have been a more logical option without impacting on our budget significantly.

Conclusion

It would be interesting to compare outcomes if the team had primarily focussed promotional efforts on the lead single instead of the remix. Given the early support from a national radio station, our efforts into marketing the original single theoretically could have assisted in creating further momentum for the song. However, given the limited budget, I believe our strategy was, although unconventional, successful in achieving our collective targets for the campaign - placing Jerome's music in front of new audiences and broadening his commercial reach as an artist.

Our communication and work ethic, individually and as a team, functioned effectively, but one major drawback I observed was not enough emphasis or importance being allocated to the project timeline, particularly with regards to setting task deadlines for assets. This prevented the operation flowing in a linear fashion, thus documents such as the behind-the-scenes video content ultimately took longer than originally anticipated. This could have been avoided by making clear distinctions of actions required after asserting strict time-sensitive deadlines. Further, the disparity between artwork and press photos showed a lack of stylistic cohesion which could have been avoided through hiring a photographer and by establishing more detailed communication on these aspects. Although video conferences were recorded, distributing transcribed minutes to each team member may have also assisted in defining duties and target dates. Despite this, I believe all these issues would be easily rectifiable or streamlined in future projects.

It should be noted that the ongoing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic heavily impacted our initial plans when starting this assignment. However, we portrayed immense adaptability as a team throughout the project in order to complete the campaign effectively and successfully, with only minor elements needing refinement.

Word Count: 2,739

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