

Creative Music Management

Reflective Summary

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Word Count: 2314
Student number: 1905892
Tileyard Education
2019-2020

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In this piece of work, one can find the different roles I had to take on, the explanation for our group decisions and what I would do differently. I will also touch on the subject of how technology has influenced the ways of promoting and working in the music industry.

1. Reflection of the Group Work

1.1. Creative Director

1.1.1. Single Artwork

My main role in this project was to be the creative director. When researching the various fields, we realised it was an area that could be comfortably executed on a low budget. ASCAP writer Sheinkopf (2014) explains that “with a little planning and some creative thinking, you can put together an impressive design on any budget”. Although I took on the role of creative director, as the writer of the song, I had the added responsibility of being the artist. Creative Director Ali J. Taylor (2017) states that using mood boards helps artists “formulate the mood or theme they would like to convey within a project.” Following both author’s mentality, I decided to commence with a mood board to plan the photo shoot. This eventually became incredibly useful for the video as well.

The idea of an artist creating their own artwork was not only chosen for its monetary benefit but the advantageous connection it procures with the fanbase. DesignBold writer Noah (2018) suggests that “they [artworks] are what connect the musician with their listeners, and more importantly, express their artistry and deliver the (hidden) message of the entire album.” Other artists such as Joni Mitchell, The Stone Roses and John Lennon have repeatedly created their own artworks, proving that this concept is not only used for artists with a low budget but by established artists. On top of that, it shows that this approach is not new but has been used for decennia.

The shoot was directed and conducted in my bathroom, using props bought on amazon.co.uk, continuing with the same mentality of cost-efficiency.

After enquiring about edits costs, my group and I decided to go for the professional’s route. Although there is an abundance of software and online platforms where one can edit pictures, it is important that the quality is there. Kipp (2018) states “investing in a well-designed cover will ensure you’re putting out the best product.” The author compares the benefits of DIY and professionally made artwork. As a group, we chose to use the advantages of both. For the professional aspect of our artwork we chose to use a graphic to ensure an end result of the highest quality.

1.1.2. Remix Artwork

For the remix' artwork, it was the obvious and economical choice to utilise one of the outtakes from the original shoot that had been edited. Once more, I decided to utilise the skills of a graphic designer, as fonts found online are often not cleared for commercial use. The choice of adding words to the artwork was done to heavily differentiate it from the original release.

1.1.3. Music Video

The decision to attempt a professional video followed a similar mentality as the one for the artwork. Pulse (2016) states that "a video connects an artist and a listener, as well as connecting a listener to an audience." It is yet another way for the artist to share a part of himself/herself with the listener. On top of that, it is essential to create a visual impact substantial enough to strengthen the chances of a track becoming a hit.

The use of mood boards came out successful for the conception of the artwork; therefore, I implemented it once more for the creation of the video. On top of that, the use of storyboards was applied. After analysing the various ways to go about a project, multiple writers emphasised the importance of storyboards for the pre-production process. Singh (2018) explains that "storyboarding becomes a way to engage the idea between the director and the designer over a period of time." Timothy (2015) agrees and adds that it helps visualise if the concept is working or if it needs to be altered.

However; this project was a trial and error process. For the conception of the project, we chose to use our network to reduce the costs. Content, Media and Film students at the University of West London provided the studio, video equipment and editing skills in exchange for the possibility to use it in their portfolio. For our narrow budget, it was an easy solution; however, the rights to the music video belong to the University of West London. After communicating my suspicion to lecturer and lawyer Alexandra Clark, she confirmed it by saying (2020) "if University Students make a film as part of their course (or create any other copyright) often the terms and conditions of the university will mean that all copyright works are automatically assigned to the University on creation." In hindsight, we do not have any regrets; however, a simpler video could have been executed with a slightly higher budget in order to own the complete copyright of the music video.

1.1.4. Teaser Video

The release of the teaser video was an obvious choice as a substantial amount of artists use them as promotion for the music video. Following the likes of Angele, Ariana Grande, Charlotte Lawrence and many more, the film team created an eleven-second video. As creative director, I chose a tight timeframe for it to be compatible with various formats such as Instagram Stories, Instagram Posts, Facebook and Youtube.

1.2. Additional Roles

As we progressed, more roles had to be taken on. In the group, I created the press release. To do so, I had to research examples of various press releases as well as read what differentiates a good release to a bad one. As we decided to do a French song, I was asked to help determine the market audiences, the targeted media to exploit and the various similar artist.

Additionally, I organised the project, created the mood boards, briefs, storyboards, budget charts and layout.

2. New Technologies

After researching the various aspects involved when doing a project of this kind, it is indisputable that the industry has shifted and various technologies are affecting how an artist can manage, distribute and promote themselves.

2.1. Music Creation

The rise of the internet has permitted artists to cut corners. The necessity to have a manager or a record label has decreased due to the DIY-era. Additionally to that, new technologies provide producers and mixing and mastering engineers on the internet. There are multiple websites such as Soundtrap, Arcade and Soundation that are online equivalents of popular DAWs such as Logic Pro and ProTools.

On top of that, some platforms offer mastering services. SoundOnSound author Inglis (2016) explains that “Online, cloud-based services are springing up which purport to take raw mixes and deliver polished masters without any direct human involvement.” An example of such a platform is Landr. The platform is renowned for its automated mastering; however it now also serves as a distribution company. Multiple companies are offering similar software. CloudBounce is another example. To the surprise of most, Abbey Road Studios has partnered up with the website. Their managing director, Isabel Garvey (as cited in Inglis, 2016) explains that they do not want “to be fighting an inevitable change”.

2.2. Release

For an artist nowadays, there are thousands of platforms to share their music with the world. There are the well-known and straightforward platforms such as YouTube and Soundcloud; however, due to how accessible the music industry has become, an artist can now submit a track and distribute it to all streaming platforms. There are aggregators, such as DistroKid, AWAL and Ditto which will send music to the differing streaming platforms, meaning the artist does not necessitate the use of a record label to release songs. Sound and Music (2019) author writes “One advantage of publishing your recorded music that way is that, unlike record labels, aggregators do not ask you to sign over any of your rights.”

Another aspect of releases that has been altered due to the rise of the internet, is what artists decide to release. Songwriter Savan Kotecha (as cited in Leight, 2018) explains that “It’s all about throwing out content.”. As the industry has changed, the market has become more saturated, meaning artists have to constantly release music. This means that more singles are being released. Controversially, albums contain more tracks than ever. Vinyl and CD’s are no longer limiting the tracklists. This has been of an incredible use as, more songs an album contains, the higher the likelihood is for it to be featured on a playlist. Simultaneously, it also boosts the number of plays on an album and therefore increases its chances to chart higher. Cole (2019) explains that this is why J. Cole’s ‘KOD’ and Post Malone’s ‘Beerbongs & Bentleys’ have broken Billboard’s Top 100 Singles Chart record of the most amount of tracks to chart at the same time.

Although the album-length has increased, singles have become shorter. Listeners’ attention span has decreased, therefore, songs are shorter to increase the chances that “the play of an artist’s song will help them accumulate equivalent sales quicker.” (Cole, 2019) These changes have affected the way an artist has to go about his or her music; however, it has also altered the mindsets of record labels, managers and publishers.

2.3. Promotion

Due to the rise of all different platforms, there are countless ways for artists to promote themselves. Between social media websites and the innumerable online blogs, there is an overflow of ways to attract the attention of an audience.

The rise of the internet has caused an enormous amount of change in the music industry. The importance of radio decreased; whereas playlists' significance has increased. Aggregators offer ways to get on playlists by simply answering specific questions.

Secondly, social media is not only helping fans spread the music of their idol, but it is also helping artists promote their music and themselves as people. Dewan and Ramaprasad (2014) state that "The music industry is a bellwether for this revolution, where social media are increasingly used for sharing information about music albums and songs—and also for the sharing of the music itself." The importance of social media has shown concrete changes. Wintel's reports (2018) shows an increase of 7% of the "overall music market share" (Cole, 2019) in 2017 due to the rise in use of social media. Those numbers represent only independent artists; however, Cole (2019) explains that social platforms also affect how established artists have promoted their work. An example is Drake's takeover of Spotify for his album release. The author (2019) explains how it worked, saying "visitors to the Browse homepage were greeted with a massive grid of Drake faces, on the cover of nearly every one of the page's playlists." Although the promotional strategy received an abundance of negativity, it was one of the first collaborations between artist and streaming platforms. Since then, various artists have collaborated with Apple Music, doing live sessions or Spotify releasing special videos. Additionally to the videos made with Spotify, artists such as Ariana Grande and Billie Eilish collaborated with the streaming platforms on interactive museum-like projects. This was another way for the artists to promote their albums whilst interacting with their fans.

Additionally to the conventional social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, there are newer applications, ideal for promoting music. TikTok, previously known as [Musical.ly](#), has become of great importance to the music industry. With 800 million downloads, more and more celebrities are creating accounts, promoting their music. Musicwatch released a research explaining that "90% of social media users take part in some form of music- or artist-related activity on social platforms." (Cole, 2019) TikTok is a prime example of such an application as users create videos miming, lip-synching and dancing to their favourite songs.

2.4. Artwork and Videos

Similarly to how there are various websites for recording and mastering music, there are now also websites available that can create an album artwork or a music video in mere minutes. Websites such as Canva, GraphicSprings and Sparks by Adobe are only a few examples of the abundance of platforms available. They provide the user with royalty-free images, fonts and icons, whilst also allowing them the use their own photography or import their own fonts.

The creation of a music video is perceived as something that will cost a fortune and therefore is only available for established or signed artists. Similarly to the websites available for the making of artworks, there are also platforms available to create videos of any kind. RotorVideos and Wave.video are websites that use royalty-free images and allow their customers to import both their own footage and their own music. After analysing the song, the software will create a video using the selected material.

This revolutionises the way anyone goes about making their visual material, once more, allowing the artist to cut corners if wanted.

In conclusion, the way an artist creates and releases music, promotes themselves and connects with an audience is heavily influenced by the use of new technologies. The team working around them must understand the target demography to know which platforms to utilise as a promotional tool. Additionally to social media's use for promotion, it is extremely useful for the artist to maintain his or her fanbase as it is a direct pathway to the audience. As mentioned previously, the rise of the internet has not only provided people with social media but has also brought various new technologies upon the music industries. Platforms to record music, master songs and edit videos completely alter the way an artist would go about preparing for a release. All of this is to be taken to account for an optimal project.

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