

Will
BRYANT



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Artist Campaign for Will Bryant's single release of 'with you, always'

Part A – My involvement in the campaign

Will Bryant is currently a song-writing and production student at Tileyard Education. He is an old friend of mine and I thought that collaborating with him would be rewarding on both a personal and professional level. Not only has the collaboration enhanced our assignment but his contribution towards the campaign has been extremely beneficial to him as an emerging artist to gain further recognition and build a wider fanbase.

Will sent me a list of demos from his private Soundcloud account that he has been working on over the last 6 months. My group partner Natasja and I listened to the collection and shortlisted three tracks that we thought were the most memorable, polished and ultimately what would get the most plays on DSPs such as Spotify and YouTube.

I undertook the role of logo creation for Will's brand and also the role of designing the artwork for the single. The logo was created with the online software called 'Wix'. To create a logo that suited Will's style, I selected the words available that would generate the correct algorithm. The words chosen from the options were 'hipster', 'fresh', 'creative', and 'timeless' (Wix, 2020). The algorithm generated was also based on the selected options of being appropriate for 'social media', 'presentations', 'merchandise' and a 'website' rather than for business cards or other forms of media (Wix, 2020). The final shortlist of logos are shown below in figure 1:



Figure 1 – List of logos generated by Israeli software company Wix.

The logo our team agreed upon was the fourth (the furthest right in figure 1). The third design with a sketch of a turntable was a feature that represented Will's vibe but after discussing with Will and the group, we believed that the symbol would be more appropriate for a company logo or label rather than an individual singer songwriter. This led us to choose a style that had a handwriting style because it is more informal, almost as though Will had scribbled the signature himself. The cost of getting full commercial usage rights and a collection of standard logo files of this logo was £13.90 – this contributed to the overall operating budget of the campaign.

The logo was also designed to be used in the Electronic Press Kit (EPK). This was another component of the campaign that I took responsibility for. The press kit contains promotional material containing information about Will that the press can use before the release of the single. The press kit begins with a short biography of Will and a list of his biggest influences. For the press kit, I drew on inspiration from a band called January that my team partner recommended to me as well as a singer songwriter from New Orleans called Luke James (January, 2021).

For the provisional campaign plans, I gathered a list of artists and designers that I knew who could create a cover for the single. These consisted of an architect and two freelance sketch artists as shown below in figure 2.

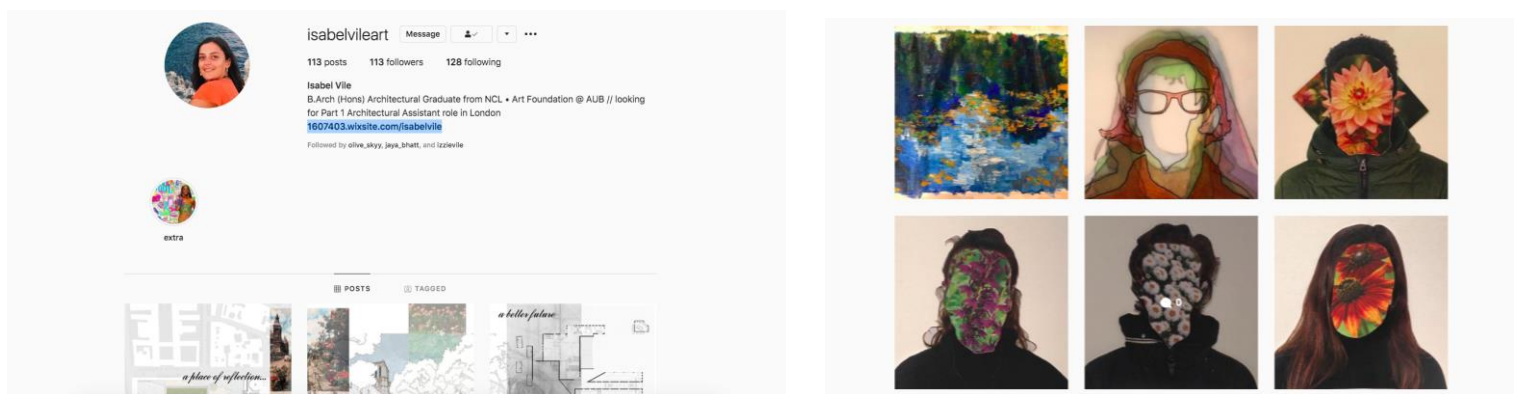


Figure 2A – Architecture Graduate from Newcastle University. Commission costs at £25 for one day but offered a reduced fee for our campaign as I knew her. Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/isabelvileart/>

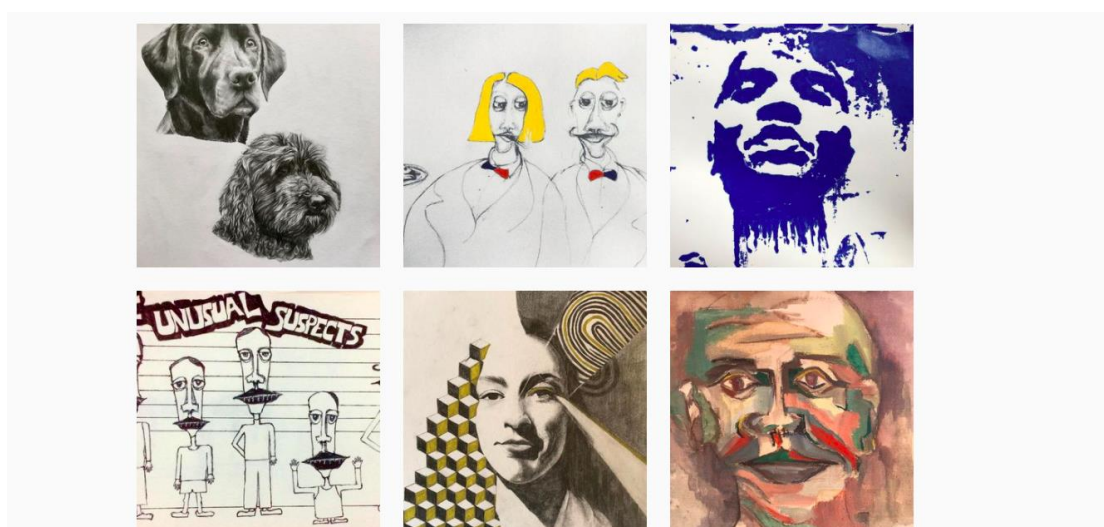


Figure 2B – Freelance artist based in London whose commissions are priced at £210 for A4 and £275 for A3. He is also an artist instructor at MasterPeace Creative Studios. Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/willhiscocksart/>

Unfortunately, due to the significant reduction in our team size, arranging a commission for Will's cover proved to be too time consuming considering how many other roles that I had to complete myself. This was a recurring theme of the whole campaign whereby I had to decipher the quickest and most effective way to complete different tasks alone. In hindsight, this resulted in the tasks being spread out too thinly with insufficient amounts of detail. Having said this, Will has not had a team working for him on any of his past releases so everything Natasja and I provided for him was a noticeable improvement to what he'd done previously himself.

Paying for a commission from the artist shown in figure 2B above would have made up nearly half of the £500 provided so would not have been financially viable. If the campaign was able to have an industry standard budget similar to that of a major label and there were no pandemic setbacks, this artist could have created an exciting and authentic design to accompany Will's single. This artist has a wide range of styles that could have been customized exactly for Will's brand image.

The artwork that I ended up creating for the campaign was designed on 'Canva'. The photo was taken by a friend of mine using a 35mm film camera. The grain from the picture created a retro, nostalgic feel that suited Will's style (see figure 4). The Mediterranean blue of the water we decided to transfer into other areas of our campaign such as social media and merchandise. Due to my expertise in graphic design being very limited, I tried to keep the cover very minimal so that it appeared as professional as possible. With this in mind, I looked up a number of covers from artists that Will said he was inspired by as shown below in figure 3.



Figure 3 – Album artwork of LANY's 'Make Out', Loyle Carner's 'Not Waving, But Drowning' and Frankie Stewart and Harvey Gunn's 'Coconuts' as sources of inspiration (see bibliography).

Using the artwork shown in figure 3 as starting points or indicators, I used a minimalist font to contribute to the simplistic cover design. The final artwork design is shown below in figure 4:

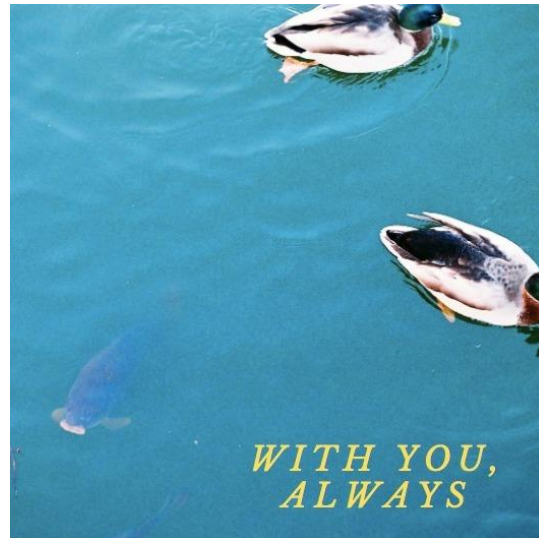


Figure 4 – Album artwork for the single release of 'with you, always'

The deep blue supports the nostalgic mood of the lyrics and the yellow stands out well because it juxtaposes the vivid blue. On top of this, the peaceful setting of ducks on the still water supports the song's lyrics of reflection as well and is congruous with the slow, chilled beat. We continued this bright blue theme in other areas of the campaign such as on the t-shirt design and promo video.

The EPK I created also included a biography, discography, release date of the single, a promo video link (which I created in preparation for the release), and additional options to download his past singles and EP's. There is also a section for notable achievements, past press reviews and URL's to Will's social media platforms so that different media outlets can easily access and share his music. I also included on this page some information about Will's requirements when performing live and his contact details.

Throughout the EPK there are photos of Will with one image of him at the keyboard and another of him playing records in his bedroom which shows his DIY approach of making music from his bedroom. Will gave us permission to access these photos taken by Nate Casely Hayford and Maria Molinero to use for the EPK. The inclusion of lots of images helps people get a better picture of what Will is like and whether they can see themselves working with him. For Will's social media, Natasja was responsible for finding a photographer specifically for the single release which is mentioned in the portfolio.

To create the promo lyric video, I used the software 'Rotor Video' (Rotor Video, 2021). This was simple to use and only contributed 3% towards the overall budget (£14.72). The limited budget and tier 4 restrictions meant that it was not possible to produce a quality video including a film crew and extras within a real-life scenario. To help build anticipation for the release the video was uploaded to Will's YouTube channel two weeks before the release date. In addition, snippets of the video were posted on his Instagram and Facebook pages in advance of the release.¹ I also conducted an interview of Will to go alongside the promo video to increase fan engagement and excitement for the release. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 restrictions I was unable to meet him in person to film the interview. Nevertheless, I included a transcription of my questions and Will's answers in the portfolio.

Part B – Your reflections

Being limited to a group of two resulted in our team doing more of the tasks together compared to if we had been a group of four. For example, the operating budget was mapped out as a pair and we divided up roles once this had been finalised. Having no previous experience in carrying out an artist campaign myself, it was challenging but ultimately rewarding undertaking several unfamiliar roles myself.

Releasing the single independently gave our campaign a number of advantages. Firstly, with a limited budget of £500 we had to find ways to spend wisely. Releasing music independently meant that we had full control over costs of revenue sources, marketing, distribution and merchandise (PQ, 2019). Moreover, our artist Will was able to have creative freedom in the campaign and allowed him to have full control over how he came across to his fans during the release process (PQ, 2019). By doing our publishing independently this also allowed us to save money and have complete ownership over Will's music (PQ, 2019).

Having said this, something we lacked in our campaign that a record label with a greater budget has was a wider network and industry contacts. To improve this shortcoming of the campaign, we applied for 'radio pluggers' awareness campaign for £750 where the organisation would send Will's musician profile to over "30,000 radio and press contacts over a two-week period" (radiopluggers, 2021). This aspect of the campaign was reliant on Will's Arts Council funding proposal of £1000 being accepted. With the radio scheme, we would receive a full

¹ Attached YouTube URL for the lyric promo video of 'with you, always':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPx-rgTedS0>

detailed report showing who has viewed Will's profile and listened to his track and which stations have downloaded his track to broadcast (radiopluggers, 2021). Furthermore, we intended to contact bloggers and music journalists who we thought would be interested to write about Will's music to promote him further (BIMM, 2017).

The limited budget and national lockdown restrictions meant that we were unable to interview Will for the promotional side of the campaign. Nonetheless, I included the transcription of the interview in the portfolio.

How did digital technologies affect the campaign?

Social media is a major example of how the music industry has become increasingly digitalised and its use has never been more important within an artist campaign. With enforced national lockdown restrictions, there is a much greater chance that fans will be engaging with their favourite artists through Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and more recently TikTok on their smart phones. Therefore, in our provisional marketing strategy we carefully planned out how we could build Will's relationship with his current fans as well as expand his fanbase (Allen, 2014, p41). This involved keeping things short and fresh by slowly releasing information to fans, so they have to look further to find out more (Allen, 2014, p41). Social media and an artist's career are so intertwined in today's industry and its use has considerably improved artist's connection with their fans (Sheffield Institute, 2021). Instagram and Facebook live streaming has increased artist to fan interaction as well as fan to fan interaction (Sheffield Institute, 2021). In other words, technology is a "disintermediating force" that enables artists to "...exert full ownership over their revenue streams and communication channels with fans" (Hu, 2018).

On a limited budget, digital technologies were extremely useful. A large proportion of the campaign we were able to do ourselves at an affordable cost which would not have been possible before the internet. The plethora of online software available to create the required media for an artist campaign ensured that our team did not have to spend money on expensive filming equipment, film crew and extras for the video. In addition, we did not have to commission an artist to create the cover for us.

As well as making the artwork and video ourselves using online software, we were able to create the logo ourselves, apply for radio ads online, and design a website using 'Squarespace'.

With the support of social media, the reliance of a major label to distribute music is no longer essential (Borth, 2019.) For the single release, there was no need to release physical copies for the single and remix because our target audience are young. Digital streaming technologies mitigates the risk of the release because no money is wasted on pressing vinyl or CD production. Furthermore, no test pressing, or promo tapes were required for the release and we could upload all promo material onto YouTube, social media or the website. Using the distribution service 'Ditto' was affordable and easy to use. Not only have digital technologies reduced the cost of physical distribution but it has also opened up new revenue streams such as paid advertising and streaming revenue (Allen, 2014, p.173).

By focusing heavily on PR and Will's 'artist identity' (using 'Music Map') to find algorithmic playlists for the single is crucial in a marketing strategy in today's industry because of the change in listening habits of consumers. A large proportion of users will 'passively' listen to music by using Spotify's radio suggestions rather than actively seeking artists (Joven, 2018). This highlights how important it is to get Will's music onto popular playlists so that his music can be heard not just in the UK but across the globe so that a widespread fanbase is developed and revenue is generated internationally. This is already evident in Will's monthly listeners with a number of followers listening from Amsterdam, Warsaw and Stockholm.

How does digital technology affect team development in a collaborative project?

Without the support of digital technology, the artist campaign would have been more complicated. Firstly, being able to set up Zoom meetings as well as group messenger chats enabled us to quickly generate ideas going forward when it was not possible to meet up face to face due to tier 4 restrictions. Moreover, group contributions can be made in real-time even when physically separated with new technologies such as google drive.

However, collaboration was significantly hindered throughout our project because we lost two out of our four team members due to various reasons. This required Natasja and I to re-allocate the remaining roles between us accordingly. The provisional plan was to divide the campaign into four equal components – operating budget, artwork, promo video, and EPK. Initially, this greater workload for the pair of us was daunting but once we divided up the parts of the campaign, it was easier to share and develop ideas because there was less of a need of referral with the other team members. A smaller group meant that we both had a more direct and closer relationship with the artist Will himself. This prevented us taking too

much control of the campaign and drifting from what Will wanted himself from the single release.

To conclude, new technologies have created challenges for artists today, but they have also provided a wealth of new opportunities with digital technology certainly helping our own campaign (Allen, 2014, p.2). The way in which music is created and released will continue to develop in tandem with the advancement of technology over the coming years.

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Wider reading

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