

THE SONATA OF BAND MANAGEMENT

by

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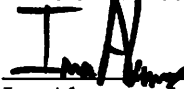
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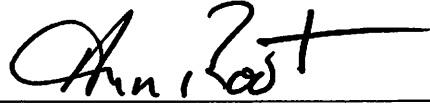


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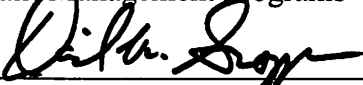


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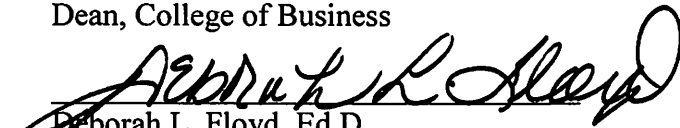
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## ABSTRACT

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The Music Industry we knew 20 years ago has evolved into a completely different business. Major labels are scrambling to adapt to a new market created by digital streaming and the heavily dominated mobile environment. The purpose of this study is to explore the choice of remaining independent as a musician, and develop a systematic process that any aspiring artist or band manager can confidently follow to ensure their project has the best chance of success. Most of the published writings on this subject are either too broad, or too business-minded for the typical musician. This thesis provides a creative approach with the organization of the information. I present the process of band management in five chapters named after the five movements of traditional sonata form:

The Introduction (Chapter 1) presents the various themes that are covered throughout the study, and describes the reasoning for using sonata form for organization and also elaborates on the author's background.

The Exposition (Chapter 2) describes the beginning stages of creating a band and establishing a creative project in the local music scene. This includes the initial formation of the band and its members, the process of networking within the local music scene, and an in depth explanation of how to effectively utilize all the "Essential Websites."

The Development (Chapter 3) describes the process of *developing* a band into a consistently gigging<sup>1</sup> project. The main topics covered are booking shows, performing shows, recording and releasing an album, and what to focus on after it is released.

The Recapitulation (Chapter 4) condenses the main topics of the thesis into a more palatable checklist of essential steps that musicians can easily reference throughout the process of managing their project.

The Coda (Chapter 5) looks towards the future of the music industry, and serves as a prediction of how the previously effective methods apply to new technologies and website.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful parents. It would not have been possible without your overwhelming love and support.

## THE SONATA OF BAND MANAGEMENT

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Every creative project starts with a vision; A vision of greater things that begins with the tiniest details. A vision that *should* be achievable through dedication and guidance, but often times falls short of becoming a reality because of easily avoidable mistakes. Advances in technology have drastically changed the music industry, especially in the last ten years. Live performances have become the primary source of income for musicians. Streaming services such as Spotify, Pandora, and Apple Music have forced major labels to completely rethink their business models, causing many to declare that the music industry is in decline.

This mindset has made way for the independent labels and self-motivated musicians to find success the “old-fashioned” way: Working diligently on their passion and maximizing their available resources. Managing a band correctly can be a daunting task for people who are just entering the industry. It can be much easier with a plan though. This thesis is intended to serve as a chronological guide for musicians to follow through the many steps of managing a band from within, and also teach them how to turn their passion into a sustainable, profitable career.

I want to provide a personal narrative on my experiences in a music group (band) specifically examining aspects that can make a band a successful business venture. My narrative is supported by both scholarly research discoveries (where appropriate) and trade sources within the music industry. My purpose in this approach is to avoid excluding the typical musician, and the resulting thesis is a bit unconventional.

## Sonata Form

In traditional Sonata form, there are five sections that make up the movement: The Introduction, the Exposition, the Development, the Recapitulation, and the Coda or “tailpiece” (Jacobson, 2013). These terms describe the musical shape of the piece, and similarly in this thesis, demonstrate the inherent flow of managing a band from within, starting from the beginning and persevering until a satisfying conclusion is achieved. This abstract view of a commonly discussed topic in the music industry is intended to broaden the typical musician’s perspective of what they are “supposed” to do with their art, and open their minds to the fact that they are pursuing a career in an industry that used to be dominated by giant corporations, but now is controlled by the artists. Artists can easily manage their own projects. It is no longer necessary to sign to a major label to be successful.

To fully appreciate the structure of this study, I ask the reader to simultaneously listen to Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in D Major, Op. 28 whilst reading. Not only is it a beautiful example of Sonata form, but it also makes everything I say sound astute.

## Background

I want to preface this text by admitting that I do not claim to be an expert on the art of “band management” and that, although my personal projects have received a good deal of recognition and success, there are many people who could write on this subject with significantly more knowledge and experience. That being said, after completing this thesis, I find myself wishing I had known all of this information years ago, and have noticed a lack of available resources on the subject. Everything discussed in this study

comes from a combination of personal experience and targeted research intended to further the knowledge in the field of band management. It is a study of what currently works and what does not in this ever-changing industry. Factors such as technology and web-trends keep everyone from becoming comfortable in their ways. Our goal as musicians and music-businesspeople should not be to sell out, but to discover an effective way to market a creative project and develop it step-by-step until our vision is achieved. The key is to *realistically* accept what your vision is, and *then* truly pursue it to the best of your ability.

For the majority of musicians, failure is prevalent and should almost be expected if fame and fortune is the ultimate goal. Even large-scale success such as a breakout-hit song does not guarantee a lasting career. Unfortunately, making music that people want to listen to is only part of the equation. The business of music is often overlooked; this oversight can be detrimental to a band's chances of succeeding. Most success stories began from nothing, and my goal is to connect the dots. However, before we dive into other artists' stories I think it is necessary to describe my own journey that brought me to pursuing a career in the music business.

My passion for music began at the age of four. Piano lessons occurred once a week until I was 18. At that point I quit taking lessons when I realized I wasn't passionate about music theory or learning other composers' works. I was passionate about creating original music. This was when I created the band, Raggy Monster (named after my childhood imaginary friend). The original drawing still resides at my parents' house. My wife is the lead singer, and I first assembled the rest of the band through Craigslist. We have had a very successful experience with the South Florida music scene. Our highlights

include sharing the stage with Smashing Pumpkins, The Misfits, and Train. We were named the #1 local band at Sunfest 2013, and have been featured in many publications, including BalconyTV.com (Editor's Pick) and Rock on Philly (featured article).

Without any initial help, I figured out how to manage the band as I went. I learned the process of booking shows, communicating effectively with venue representatives, and the proper way to promote events. I learned how to create a marketable image with an official website and social media pages. I learned how to raise money for our first and second album through crowd funding websites such as Kickstarter and Pledge Music. I learned how to approach the process of recording a full-length album in a high-end studio (and why it is worth the money). I learned how to press and distribute music through iTunes, Spotify, CD Baby, Discmakers, and other essential platforms. I learned how to deal with complicated legal issues, register the band as an LLC, and manage it as an actual business. It was both an invaluable learning experience, and the most fun I have had in my life. At some point I realized that the long-term career I was searching for in music needed to begin on the business side of the industry. This is a nonconventional thesis in that it is a narrative that brings my personal experiences with the commercial aspects of a music group, and connects them with business strategies and scholarly research related to the topics.

## CHAPTER 2: EXPOSITION

In classical music, the word “exposition” describes the beginning of a Sonata. This is where the themes are introduced and contrasted. The emphasis on contrast, even conflict, is the element that distinguishes the exposition of a sonata-form movement from the first section of an earlier binary form, the likes of which you would find in the Baroque period (Jacobson, 2013). Likewise, the conflict of the earlier stages of a creative project can be discouraging, and most do not make it past this point. Forming a band and introducing it into the local scene is the first, and arguably most important step in establishing lasting relationships with people. Learning effective communication and presentation in social settings (both online and in person) will have a major influence on a band’s success immediately.

### Assembling a Team

Connections are critical in the music industry, but being proactive can greatly increase your chances of making the *right* connections. When a band forms, there is much more to take into account than simply finding like-minded musicians. In fact, to do it right you need more than just the band members. A working band needs musicians, photographers/videographers, people to manage their merchandise, promoters, a publicist, a web/SEO person, an accountant, and many other support roles. Initially, it is best to devote your full attention to each small increment, otherwise you may find yourself discouraged and overwhelmed. Other than the musicians, the most important

position a band needs to succeed is a hardworking, passionate manager. This is necessary from day one. Usually this is the founder of the project, but it does not have to be.

### Band Relationships

One of the biggest mistakes a band manager can make right from the start is putting a group of people together that do not fit. The compatibility should be both musical and personal. While it is great to gain experience jamming<sup>2</sup> with anyone and everyone you can, if a band is officially assembled (meaning you have a public listing of the band members and their roles), you may be stuck with people who are not like-minded when things get more serious.

So where can one find like-minded musicians? There are many options. Craigslist works better than one would expect, as long as you are diligent and willing to sift through many sub-standard potential band members. Sometimes it can take months of regularly posting advertisements until the right person becomes available, so patience is key. The advertisement should describe your *ideal* candidate. The more details you include about the kind of musician you are looking for, the less incompatible responses you will receive. Just be careful not to sound overly arrogant. There is a fine line between accurately describing a professional project and scaring away highly qualified musicians with pretentiousness.

In addition to Craigslist and other similar classified websites, there are others specifically devoted to finding local musicians, such as Bandmix.com, FindAMusician.com, and Gigmor.com. Facebook even has an option to search for “[type of musicians] that live near [your location].” Often these results will include a majority of musicians that are already committed to another regularly gigging band, but they may be

interested in a side project, or contemplating leaving their current band. It never hurts to ask politely. Usually these musicians will not be interested in joining another project, especially a startup, but may be able to help connect you with the right people. Raggy Monster has found this to be very effective, and has auditioned several musicians this way.

Another option that can facilitate your search for band members is to visit the nearest music store, recording/rehearsal studio, or music departments at local colleges. Posting flyers in all of these locations can be effective as well, but get permission before doing so. In the end, trying as many options as possible only increases your chances of finding the right person. At the very least, you are creating awareness of your project. The method that has worked the best for Raggy has been going to other successful local bands' shows and getting to know people in the music scene. Befriending other musicians and simply asking around town should eventually lead to a solid lineup.

### Knowing When and How to Make Changes

Even with all the effort to find appropriate group members, there may come a time when a member of the band needs to be kicked out. This process can be painful, and it is common for musicians to react impulsively and irrationally. Age, job-status, mode/reliability of transportation, level of commitment, and many more factors can cause problems well after a band is gigging, and often lead to members splitting ways. Think of it as if everyone in the band is dating each other. Each member must understand that they will have to sacrifice their opinions at times in order to avoid unnecessary altercations. There is practically nothing more detrimental to a band's chemistry than membership changes.



Of course it is easiest to start with a group that works well together, but if changes must be made, do not book any shows until you feel confident enough that the band could put on an impressive show. Local music scenes (especially in big cities) are brutally competitive, so a great first impression can make or break a band just as it would with any startup business. If you have a member of your band that is negatively affecting your relationship with venues, or the internal relationships of the band members, replace them.

Member changes commonly have a snowball effect. It is discouraging for everyone to lose or fire a member. Re-training a new person is stressful, and if you are not careful, you can end up with someone worse. It can be tempting to book shows without a complete group when they are offered, but scrambling to throw together a line-up solely because you have a show booked can be disastrous. Not only can you end up with a new member that will need to be replaced eventually, but playing a show under-prepared may lead to a negative public opinion of your band if you sound sloppy, which is very difficult to recover from. Once a venue's representative has an adverse opinion towards your project, it is not likely you will repair that relationship enough to continue booking shows with them. Booking managers get so many band submissions every day that they have no reason to work with anyone they do not like.

The process of firing a band member should be handled with sensitivity. Of course, if the dismissal is a result of an altercation then there is no way to practice sensitivity, but often times the altercation could have been avoided. No matter what the situation, honesty will go much further than a watered down explanation. Being indirect with your reasoning will only make the process more difficult. One effective method is to meet with the member one-on-one and tell them the exact reasons for the decision. If this

method seems like it would not be well received, you may want to make the gesture less personal. In some cases, it is not rude to fire a member via text or phone conversation if you do not have a personal relationship. In this situation, the process directly relates to the viability of the band as a business.

Every band will have to overcome personal issues at some point. Differences of opinions will be many among members, including: religious beliefs, work schedules, recreational habits, musical tastes, and many more. Often times these differences result in band member changes. Because of the variety of views, it is smart to prepare for any legal issues by having a written agreement between the band members to distinguish the original song copyrights. It is all part of the process though, and you cannot let yourself become discouraged when something is not working out.

#### Originals or Covers?

Before you actually add anyone to the group, you need to decide if the project will be an original band<sup>11</sup> or a cover band<sup>12</sup>. At first, many musicians that are pursuing a source of income with music will inevitably turn to playing covers because that is what most good paying venues want on the local level. The problem is that playing covers is only a temporary source of income, whereas royalties from an original song that becomes a hit will bring you royalty checks for the rest of your life! The long-range benefits to writing original music are clear, but it is always good to look at the options.

If you choose to pursue the route of writing original music, you will probably not make decent money in the beginning, but that should be expected. After gas money and rent on our studio, Raggy Monster did not make a profit until over a year of gigging consistently. However, during that time we focused on establishing ourselves as one of

the most consistent, dependable, original bands in the area. That means we never cancelled last minute, always showed up at least an hour before show time, and consistently promoted our shows (more than just posting on Facebook). These types of efforts should be expected from both original and cover bands.

If you choose to be a cover band you need, at the very least, a three-hour long set prepared before venues will be willing to pay you properly. Raggy went through a time where we played many three-hour shows at bars and restaurants because the pay was higher. In order to perform for that long, we had to play almost 50% cover songs. The problem was that we noticed a distinct drop in the attendance of our original shows at real music venues because we were playing too often in the same area. Logically, you would not even want to go see your *favorite* band once a week, so you must be careful not to stretch your fan base too thin if you are oversaturating your local scene. I have witnessed several original bands get stuck in this rut of local shows and never get out. The best rule is to avoid book in the same city more than once a month.

Choosing to play original music or covers depends on your aspirations as a musician, but either way the likelihood of monetary success is low. The number of musicians pursuing an independent route is steadily increasing due to the power of the Internet. The statistics are daunting. Josh Briggs, a music publisher at Terrorbird Publishing, says

“While this would be nearly impossible to calculate, I’d say there are easily tens of thousands [of successful independent bands], not counting every kid that gets a guitar for his or her birthday. The SXSW Festival and the unrelated events surrounding it host upwards of 3,000 bands, the vast majority of which we could

define as “independent.” In 2012, “independent” music made up 32.6% of all music sales. There are hundreds of thousands of artist pages on BandCamp, and more than a million combined members of the American Performing Rights Organizations (ASCAP, BMI, SESAC). Within all those numbers, there are of course “major” artists, dead artists, fake artists, foreign artists, etc. So like I said, counting is tough. And none of that includes artists with no online presence or sales, of which there assuredly are still some, but we can safely say lots.” (Briggs, 2014, p. 1).

The point is your other band members need to fully understand and agree with your goals before you decide on a permanent line-up.

#### Where and When to Practice

Once you have the right group assembled, it is time to determine where and when to practice. This depends heavily on everyone’s living situation. If a band member has a living arrangement for practice without distractions or repercussions that is ideal. However, if some members have long commutes it may eventually cause problems. A centralized location will alleviate those issues. Raggy practiced for 3 years in a second story warehouse in a deserted industrial district at night. We often played until the sun came up and people were arriving for work. Unfortunately, this kind of location is rare and usually expensive. We reluctantly left the “Raggy Factory” after three years because the rent was costing us most of the money we made on monthly shows. Any space will do, as long as everyone is happy. Discussing a budget and delegating responsibilities can go a very long way.

## Delegation and Communication

Delegating responsibilities to other band members not only eases your own workload, but also increases band morale, the importance of which is astounding. It is difficult to find someone to share the workload that you can depend on for quality work. Things like Social Media management, reaching out to venues, promoting/booking shows, and keeping track of band financials are all tasks that need to be done by someone who cares about the project's wellbeing, which should obviously include the band members. If you try to handle all of the responsibilities yourself it can often result in others feeling left out, and you feeling overwhelmed. Delegation can alleviate both.

## Band Meetings

Every successful business periodically meets and discusses what actions are required in order to achieve their goals. A musical project is no different. Sitting down and talking about your goals at least once per practice is imperative! For the inevitable member that never stops playing at full volume, this means NO MUSIC. Call it a "band meeting" and take it seriously! When something is bothering you, address it calmly before it bottles up into a larger issue. Once again, being in a working band is like dating multiple people. If you do not express your feelings to each other, there is no way to collaborate effectively.

## Email

Email is one of the most effective forms of communication with your fans, yet independent bands rarely use it. Organization enhances collaboration between band members. For example, Raggy has a shared email address (Booking@RaggyMonster.com) that we use for all band related activity. Whenever we

reach out to book a show with a new venue, we use an email template that is effective because it is personable and concise, based on what we have found to work with other venues. It will also drastically increase your chances of getting responses to have an email address that looks legitimate. Sk8tRboy4ever1999@earthlink.net is not going to get the same level of respect as a professional sounding address. These concepts will be discussed much more in the “Development” section.

#### Hiring an Accountant/Lawyer

In the early stages of a project, it is not necessary for your accountant to be a professional. Often times this responsibility ends up going to the founder/manager of the band. However, if the founder or longer term committed members are comfortable delegating accounting responsibilities to one member, then it is recommended. Once you begin booking paying shows, it is wise to set up a band fund to cover your expenses. These expenses include recording, mixing, mastering, pressing, touring, and many other aspects that professional bands must account for. These financial duties include two primary responsibilities: acquiring payments after performances, and managing the funds you accumulate.

Hiring a lawyer can be expensive and unnecessary in the beginning stages of forming a band. However, there will be times where legal council is extremely helpful. Having a friend with experience in entertainment law is obviously the best option, but you can also find many helpful resources on the Internet. Ultimately, once you reach a certain level of success it becomes necessary to have a professional handling your legal issues.

## Creating an Image

Choosing a name for a creative project should not be taken lightly. In today's SEO<sup>13</sup> dependent world, what really matters is that people can find your project by searching for it. Uniqueness and memorability are key components. Naming a project something like "Panda Bear" is risky. On one hand, you associate your project with something that everyone can relate to, and most people find adorable. On the other hand, when someone searches on Google for "Panda Bear," the main results will be of the animal, not the musician. Especially before a project is off the ground, a generic name can make it very difficult for casual fans to find your material.

Creating a memorable name can be difficult, but there are a few elements to consider that can facilitate your decision. The most important is to ensure it is thought provoking. Many successful bands have names with no meaning whatsoever. The reason people remember their name is because they are able to associate it with the group, not something else. Whether it is a background story, a hidden meaning, or just random words that evoke an emotion that coincides with the band's sound, the name needs to be able to spark conversation.

Once you have chosen a name, it is time to protect it as a trademark. Many bands avoid this process, but it is especially imperative if you choose a name that could easily be copied. Doing so could be purposeful, or accidental if the name is even somewhat generic. First, you should know that you cannot copyright the name of a band. Copyright law does not protect names, titles, slogans, or short phrases. Copyright protection, however, may be available for a band's logo design or artwork if it contains sufficient authorship. In some circumstances, a band's logo may be protected as a trademark.

Consulting an experienced trademark lawyer can be beneficial if you are unsure. It is also prudent to figure out who owns the trademark rights in the band name, and get that agreement in writing (most often through an LLC agreement) (ORear, 2009).

### Aesthetic Appearance

The physical appearance of any public figure is an important part of creating a positive image. This is especially true within the music industry. Your attire creates a first impression that sticks with people. For some artists these variations in look and attire can mean painting their faces, wearing all black, dressing up in suits, or sporting long hair and beards. The point is, avoid extreme disconnects in appearance and your audience expectations, such as looking homeless when you are recording a lullaby compilation album. On the other hand, this disparity may be a perfect recipe for unexpected success. Sometimes it is hard to know how the audience will react.

### Etiquette

Professionalism in any business situation is essential. In the music industry there is an expected behavior from artists that is often not followed. Being conscious of what makes a venue dislike you is an important part of establishing a beneficial relationship. Make sure to promote every show well, and communicate regularly with the people in charge. Do not wait until the day before to resolve details, such as, when you need to show up, what equipment to provide, and how long your set is supposed to be. Musicians are often frustrated with the timeliness of venue representatives, but you have to realize that most of the time they are not purposefully ignoring you. Be persistent until you get a response. It is not the venue's responsibility for you to be prepared!



## Practice!

No matter how good you look, you still need to have a cohesive sound. If you go on stage ill prepared, people will notice and your project will appear amateur. Practicing at least on a weekly basis should be expected of every member. Approach the practices with a serious mindset, and have a checklist of what you want to accomplish (The Recapitulation section of this thesis can facilitate). This does not mean you cannot have fun and be lighthearted, but practices are when new songs are often written, and everyone starts playing as a unit instead of a group of musicians.

## Socializing

Having an online presence via social media is imperative in any modern business. In the music industry this includes, and is certainly not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pandora, Spotify, Bandcamp, Soundcloud, Reverbnation, Sonicbids, Snapchat, Periscope, Patreon, and many others that are constantly being launched. Most businesses rely on social media platforms with the hope that people will see posts in their newsfeeds as they scroll through the endless sea of baby pictures, kitten videos, and naked celebrity scandals. The key is understanding how to provide true fans with a unique experience on each platform so there is an incentive to follow you on all of them. Syncing your Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr to post the same thing as each other will dissuade your fans from following you on multiple platforms. Using social media effectively will quickly provide your project with an advantage because most people do not utilize it properly.

## Appearing Local

There can be advantages to appearing local in the beginning stages of forming a band; however, once you have established a name for your project locally it is usually advantageous to remove any signs of limitation to a small area. This does not mean you cannot list where you are based, but if you put yourself in the shoes of someone reviewing your band for an out of state show, aspects of your project may appear unprofessional. For example, it is good to list reviews and write-ups your band has received, but make sure they are not all referencing your immediate area. One great way to appear more experienced than a local band is to reach out to blogs in other states that include the city in their name.

Professionalism goes a very long way in an industry filled with unprofessional people. Make sure your biography is well written and in third person. Do not try to embellish your biographical narrative too much. If your project is new and does not have any impressive shows or reviews to flaunt, do not compose your websites from that angle. Make sure your information is accurate and lacks typos, your best pictures and videos are the first thing that people see, and you do not go overboard trying to appear to be something you are not. Professionals will see right through that type of behavior.

## The Essential Websites (And How to Use Them)

Having an *Official Website* is not essential right away, but once you start dealing with more professionals in the industry you will want to have a domain that is not a social media page. Owning a professional-looking .com website provides significant influence when you are trying to book shows. We use Wix.com to host RaggyMonster.com, but there are many websites that do a great job, including squarespace.com, wordpress.com,

and several others. In the beginning stages of forming a band, websites like Bandcamp.com and your Facebook page should be effective enough to get your project noticed locally.

*Facebook* is now significantly the largest social media platform of all time, and arguably the most essential website for almost any business regardless of the industry. If you are not on Facebook at this point, many people will not know you exist. Facebook has changed over the years though, especially when it comes to running your business through it. Before they rewrote their algorithm, a post would reach more people “organically” than it does now. Several journalist and researchers have documented the extensive changes to Facebook’s use of algorithms to augment the displays of the social media site (O’Reilly, 2014). Organic reach refers to how many people you can reach without paying on Facebook by posting to your page (Boland, 2014). For example, when Raggy Monster posts a picture on our page, every person that scrolls past it on their Newsfeed counts as one reach. They do not have to click on the photograph, or even look at it. The reason this algorithm is detrimental for pages is because it tracks how much interest a post receives. If a post is not engaging, Facebook will push it to the bottom of everyone’s newsfeed, which is why quality content is essential.

With Facebook’s constantly changing algorithms, the organic reach for businesses has plummeted. Facebook claims that this is due to the increased amount of content due to the popularity of smartphones, and an attempt to improve the amount of high quality content that is displayed on each user’s individually unique newsfeed. The algorithm is partially based on a user-driven survey that Facebook compiled in response to user complaints of too many irrelevant posts showing up in their newsfeeds. Many questions

are considered in this survey, including “Is this timely and relevant content?”, “Is this content from a source you would trust?”, and several others (Kacholia, 2013). The algorithm is intended to improve the overall quality of the user’s experience, but for the person trying to run their business through Facebook it makes it more difficult to reach their followers. So what can one do to increase their posts’ reach?

First, it is important to compose every post to be engaging and eye-catching. Quality over quantity is an essential practice for increasing your page’s effectiveness. The faster your post gets likes, comments, and shares, the longer it will stay on peoples’ newsfeeds, and therefore the more people will see it. This process is difficult to master, and learning from experience is the only way to find out what works for your specific page. This topic will be covered more in depth in the “Posting Effectively” section.

The other way to guarantee a post will reach more people is the one that potentially makes users upset: paying to boost posts for increased reach. Let me explain why this is the best option, and why I use it often. Managing a band is very similar to managing a business in many ways, and most successful businesses have a budget delegated solely to advertising. Musicians need to understand that, if used properly, boosting posts can give you a distinct advantage over the competition. In order to save money, you should only boost the most important posts. It does not take much, especially compared to most forms of advertisement. A \$3 boost can increase your reach significantly! For example, when Raggy boosts a post for \$3, it usually increases the reach by 300% or more. Compared to other forms of advertising, this is one of the cheapest and most effective.

Another important and useful feature of Facebook is their “insights” tab. This

allows the page manager to analyze the effectiveness of every post made from their page. This can be especially useful for people who do not fully understand what kind of post works well for their specific fan base. Facebook's insights allow the page manager to easily study what has worked and what has not. Using Facebook insights can be an easy, effective way to gain an accurate understanding of the kind of content your fans want to see.

*YouTube* has long been the leading website for hosting videos, but that may be changing soon. Facebook recently has been pushing businesses to host their videos directly on Facebook instead of YouTube by decreasing the visibility of posts not uploaded directly to Facebook. This new update in their system could prove to be disastrous for YouTube (Google). Huge brands such as McDonalds, Budweiser, and even Beyoncé have started utilizing Facebook to release videos due to its higher rate of engagement. "It's such a smart play because it's the most natural next step in slowly taking over video," said Robert Sandie, CEO of online video tracker and consultant vidIQ (Sloane, 2014).

Regardless of Facebook's continuing trend of dominance, YouTube is still an incredibly important website for artists to take advantage of. Creating a channel is straightforward, and many people have turned their YouTube channels into a sustainable career by monetizing their videos. "Youtubers" such as MysteryGuitarMan and PhillipDeFranco have been earning a living from their channels by consistently posting content that their fans "subscribe" to. It will be interesting to see if YouTube can hold on to their dominance of the market with the threat of Facebook's new video hosting features and biased algorithm. Currently it is effective to use both websites, but

experimenting with your posts and studying the analytics is the key to learning what works best for your particular needs.

*Twitter* is a very interesting website that many people do not understand how to use properly. To describe Twitter as simply as possible, it is a worldwide conversation. Users communicate through hashtags<sup>14</sup> about trending topics as they are happening live all over the world. Most other social media sites provide a way to synchronize your posts so they are automatically shared to Twitter. There are a few problems with this process, the worst being Twitter's 140-character limit. The intent of the character limit is to ensure a clean, concise Twitter feed for their users, but this feature can be an issue if you rely too heavily on auto-posting.

For example, you can synchronize your Facebook posts for instant sharing on Twitter, but they may be truncated if they exceed the character limit. If your post includes a link, (which naturally has a large number of characters), you may want to compose a separate version to be posted on Twitter. URL shortening websites such as Bitly and SmartURL can be helpful when you want to include as much as possible in a tweet.

Another reason it is smart to not rely on auto-posting is that, unlike other Social Media sites, it usually does not hurt you to post as often as possible on Twitter. Especially when you are posting about a trending topic, the more you post only increases your visibility among people talking about the same thing. You may even be able to catch the attention of a celebrity or person of influence by tagging them directly in your post.

*Instagram* is one of the newer social media giants, but do not underestimate its usefulness. In many ways, Instagram is quickly becoming as essential as Facebook for businesses. There are many people who have abandoned Facebook for Instagram because

it focuses on what they primarily used Facebook for, sharing pictures. Instagram provides an amazingly simple way to quickly snap, edit, and post pictures (and 15-second videos) for your followers to see. It easily syncs to your other social media websites, and is extremely effective for connecting with other users who have similar interests. For example, if you are an Indie Rock band from Portland, it would be beneficial for you to include #IndieRock #Portland #Oregon in every picture you post, not to mention countless other hashtags that are specific to your local scene. Anyone else that includes those hashtags will be one click away from seeing your pictures in a feed that only includes the related tag. This topic is covered more in-depth in the next section, Posting Effectively. The fact is, if you are a band and do not have an Instagram yet, make one and use it often.

*Spotify* is quickly overtaking Pandora as the most popular music streaming service, with over 60 million active users, 15 million of which are paid subscribers (Spotify, 2015). Unfortunately, many music industry professionals are concerned about the payment structure that Spotify uses to compensate artists. At first glance, their controversial formula seems confusing and not very kind to artists:

Recently, these variables have led to an average “per stream” payout to rights holders of between \$0.006 and \$0.0084. Although this number comes directly from Spotify’s website, they do not agree with this view of their system, stating:

“We personally view “per stream” metrics as a highly flawed indication of our value to artists for several reasons. For one, our growing user population might listen to more music in a given month than the month before (resulting in a lower effective “per stream”), while generating far more aggregate royalties for artists.

As with any subscription service, our primary goal is to attract and retain as many paying subscribers as we possibly can, and to pass along greater and greater royalties to the creators of the music in our service. Theoretically, another service could generate higher effective “per stream” payouts simply by having users who listen to far less music. We believe, however, that our service and the lives of artists will both be best if the world’s music fans enjoy more music than ever before in a legal, paid manner.”

Although this seems to be a logical explanation for their methods, there have been several high-profile musicians that have publicly opposed Spotify, including The Beatles, and more recently, Taylor Swift. Her 2014 hit, Shake It Off, had the most total streams on Spotify in October 2014, and mostly likely would have continued that trend, if it had not been pulled from Spotify’s catalog, along with the rest of Swift’s music (Johnson, 2014). The reasoning was because the streaming royalties she was receiving were not comparable to the money she was making from distributors such as iTunes. This is to be expected though, because buying music on iTunes is a one-time payment, whereas streaming royalties are paid continuously every time people listen to a song. Taylor Swift made over \$300,000 from 46.3 million streams of her song “Shake It Off” in October 2014 alone (Johnson, 2014).

*Apple Music* is Apple’s new streaming service that directly competes with Spotify and the other major brands. It is actually a rebranding of iTunes, and works in conjunction with Beats. It is available for \$10 per month, and also offers a \$15 per month family plan for up to 6 members. It will be interesting to see how this affects Spotify, Pandora, and the music industry in general in the next few years. Spotify has already



made a drastic attempt to combat the new competition by offering a 3-month trial of their premium service for \$1. The fact is, streaming is the future of the industry, and Apple is finally adapting to that model (Waniata, 2015).

*Soundcloud* is an audio distribution platform that focuses on the basics of the listening experience. It allows its users to upload originally created sounds, share them, and listen to other artists' music. Songs on the website (and mobile app) are displayed simplistically as visual sound waves. The user can also comment on specific parts of the song and the comments from other people pop up when the song reaches them.

Soundcloud also recently introduced their new partner program for creators, "On Soundcloud," which ensures their artists receive the proper royalties for plays. Currently the premium version of the service is invite only, but will be available to a larger number of artists soon (Soundcloud, 2015). For both Raggy Monster and The Whiskey Wasps, Soundcloud is used more as a "behind the scenes" type of website for demos and unreleased tracks. However, many artists use it as their primary source for releasing new music.

*ReverbNation* is an extremely valuable resource for independent bands to use, especially when they are getting started. It provides the tools to build an effective EPK or Electronic Press Kit (which they call an RPK), that you can submit to opportunities for festivals, paid gigs, contests, and chances for licensing your music to be used in films, commercials, and more. ReverbNation also has an engaged social network of bands and musicians, and a ranking system that rewards you for utilizing every facet of the site.

*Sonicbids* is similar to ReverbNation, but it focuses more heavily on the opportunities than the social aspects. It was how Raggy Monster was chosen to open for

Train at Sunfest 2013. It also offers easy to use tools for creating a rider<sup>6</sup> and stage plot<sup>7</sup> for sending to Stage Managers.

*Bandcamp* is a great website for artists to create a landing spot to sell your album and merchandise. Especially if you don't have an official website and you want to save money on buying a URL, Bandcamp is an invaluable resource. Even if you do have an official website, it is still a useful site to utilize.

*Bandpage* is a central hub for artists to do almost every aspect of managing a band. They make it incredibly easy to get your album distributed, add a tab to your Facebook page for fans to buy your album, listen to music, and much more. Their layout is clean and simple to navigate, which makes it almost enjoyable to do some of the tedious aspects. One of my favorite features is their connection to Spotify. With a fully updated profile, fans listening to you on Spotify can also see your upcoming shows, buy your merchandise, and even sell VIP experiences to your most avid followers!

*BandsInTown* mostly focuses on tour dates. As a user you receive notifications whenever a band you follow is playing a show nearby (hence the name). As an artist, it is easy to keep your show dates updated and your fans informed by syncing it to Facebook. Most of its features are also available on other sites such as Bandpage, Reverbnation, and Songkick.

*Songkick* is similar to BandsInTown, but with some key differences. BandsInTown forces you to manage your account through Facebook, which can be annoying at times, but managing Songkick is mostly navigated through their website. As a fan, Songkick is addicting to use. Once you start following your favorite bands, more suggestions pop up based on your preferences. Before you know it, you could be

following hundreds of bands by just clicking on their pictures as they pop up. Then Songkick automatically creates a calendar of upcoming shows near your location(s). They also recently introduced Tourbox, which is a very useful feature for touring bands and tour managers specifically to plan and announce tours.

*NextBigSound* is a New York-based company that provides analytics for online music. The company analyses the popularity of musicians in social networks, streaming services, and radio. They provide these statistics in an aesthetically pleasing, easy to understand way. Whether you are using it to analyze your own band's popularity, or to better understand what others are doing well, NextBigSound.com is a very useful, fascinating way to understand how the Internet is affecting music.

*Periscope* is also very useful because it focuses on live content. It allows users all over the world to follow exactly what you are doing, and gives fans a sense of being there with you in the moment. Try it out next time you are in an interesting situation such as right before going on stage, or even just during practice.

Countless other websites can be useful for band managers. Covering all of them in this thesis would be overwhelming. In the end, it comes down to your personal preference for which web and social media sites work best for your specific situation. The key is learning how to use each platform effectively. Although this should be a learning process that is different for each website, there are a few general rules to posting effectively on any social media resource.

### Posting Effectively

Themed Content refers to making sure that everything you make public will be well received by your fans. Whether it is a photo, video, music, or status-update, it is

important to think about how you would perceive the post from an unbiased perspective. Especially when you are composing an important update, such as an official announcement of your album release date, make sure to have other trustworthy sources proofread the post before it is made public. Another helpful tip is to look up a few of your favorite bands and model your posts after theirs. There truly is a science to posting effectively, which is why most signed bands have a professional managing their social media. Most likely, you will be managing this on your own though, so keep your content relevant, professional, and engaging.

Engaging Fans with your posts is a very effective way to increase your visibility. Especially on Facebook, receiving more comments results in a larger reach on your posts. One easy way to engage fans is to ask a question with the first sentence. This method encourages a conversation in your comment section, and often causes fans to interact with each other. It can be as simple as “What song do you want to hear us play tonight?” or as in-depth as getting your fans’ opinion on which T-Shirt design they like the best. For the latter example, Facebook has a useful tool for making surveys for your fans to vote on.

Tagging is another essential tool to utilize as much as possible on Social Media. Before you compose and submit a final post, make sure you look up some relevant hashtags. For example, if you had a show in Miami at The Fillmore, you would want to be sure to include #Miami #SouthFlorida #TheFillmore and tag the venue and surrounding area directly (Search @The Fillmore Miami on Facebook and @TheFillmore on Instagram). It does not take long to research what tags you should use, and it can make a big difference. I have a long list saved on my phone so I can simply copy and paste it

every time I make a post. Venues always appreciate it because you are bringing awareness to the event and their social media pages.

Real-Time Marketing is based on events that are up to date, sometimes even currently taking place. It takes advantage of things that are trending, and can be extremely effective if used properly. For example, when Arby's tweeted to Pharrell Williams at The Grammys to give them back their hat, it brought attention to their brand by using the trending topic of the #Grammys (Brandau, 2014). Facebook and Twitter are the best ways to research and utilize this kind of strategy. Next time a relevant topic is trending on social media, try making a clever post about it. If you succeed in capitalizing on this real-time marketing, you will bring traffic to your page, and improve your fans' opinion of your project.

#### Creating a Network and Communicating Effectively

If you are creating quality music that is truly unique, success should be attainable. Being proactive with your finished product is the key though. Be aware of every opportunity that presents itself and capitalize on it. For example, if there is a local person you know of with major connections, present your music to them. However, many people have trouble finding the fine line between making a good first impression and being too forward. This mostly comes with experience, but there are a few things to keep in mind when approaching a potential connection.

First off, make sure it is a convenient time for them to talk. Most people with influence are inherently busy, and forcing an interaction at a bad time can result in them having a negative impression of you immediately.

Once you have determined a good time for them, start the conversation with a question about their work. Most people enjoy talking about what they do with their time, and it is a great way to get a conversation going.

After that topic has run its course naturally, transition the conversation into your project. Keep it very brief, highlight your strengths, hand them a copy of your work, and let them be on their way. If you managed to have an engaging conversation, they will leave intrigued and eager to hear your music.

### The Power of the Street Team

It is immensely helpful to bring in other people to cover jobs like handing out flyers, photographing and videoing shows, and running the merchandise table while the band is playing. A great way to do this is to establish a street team to help promote shows and other things like your new single, music videos, etc. At first, this could just include close friends and family, but eventually it should consist of the most avid fans of the band. You can even create incentives for people to help out, such as free admission to shows, access to unreleased demos, free merch<sup>3</sup>, etc. Raggy Monster has done a promo before that gave away a free T-Shirt and two tickets to our next show for a randomly selected fan who shares the event page on their Facebook wall. The more creative, the more effective it will be. Signed gear and flyers can also go a long way with fans, and it doesn't cost you anything other than a silver Sharpie (that's what we prefer, but other colors *CAN* be effective if used with extreme caution)<sup>4</sup>.

The way we manage our street team is by making a separate group on Facebook. People feel privileged to be selected as part of a small community that believes in the project. Be careful not to add friends that are not interested. Otherwise you may come off

as being annoying by adding people against their will. You want this group to be filled with people that are happy to help. Initially you should add around 20 of the closest fans that will genuinely be excited to be involved. Adding more people will be difficult to manage at first while still making it feel personal. Currently Raggy Monster has over 250 members in our street team (although only approximately 50 are actively engaged), and we are able to accomplish overwhelming tasks when everyone is involved. This is especially helpful with things like fan voted competitions and opportunities.

#### Cultivating a Professional Network

There is another aspect to your street team that is usually developed well after you have established the project, and that is your professional network. Most successful businesses are built by networking your advantageous connections, and the in the music industry it is essential. For example, we have local photographers, videographers, visual artists, promoters, and more that we work with consistently. Usually we pay for their time, but it is well worth it, and sometimes they will work for free because we became friends over time and bring them more business. We have also had people reach out to us that want to be involved for their own enjoyment or to expand their portfolio. Local schools can also be a very effective place to recruit talented artists that will be happy to collaborate. Establishing and cultivating these connections will only bring more awareness and respect to your project.

Spending money in the right places is difficult for many bands. Some bands consider it taboo to spend their money on anything, while others waste theirs unnecessarily on things like contests and opportunities that are commonly rigged. Startup businesses always require an initial investment to get everything off the ground, but often

(maybe it is because musicians are usually broke) bands react negatively to paying for things.

It can be difficult to determine when and where to spend your money. Once your project is showing signs of success, you will start to receive offers from promotional companies, printing services, and many others. The promotional offers can be especially confusing, and I would advise extreme caution before spending precious dollars on them. We have received especially tricky offers from blogs that promise a tempting amount of reach to potential fans all over the world. If it sounds too good to be true, it often is.

Recording a demo is a quick, cheap option for reaching out to booking representatives (especially if a live video is included). If you do not have the capability to record a demo yourself, or the budget to invest in equipment, there is usually someone in the local scene that would be willing to track a song for minimal pay.

### The Local Scene

It is just as important to attend local shows as it is to play them, especially in a band's early stages. Showing your faces together at another local band's show means more to them than you realize. Not only will you become more recognizable to people within the music scene, but also the other bands will often return the favor. When they respect you, so will their fans. In addition, if you are having trouble with booking shows, local bands will usually be more than happy to steer you in the right direction. Collaborating with another local band you get along with can turn into double the gigs, half the practice space rent (if your schedules align), and double the connections. Just make sure you do not book the same line-up too often or your fans will tire of seeing the same show. A great way to keep your performances fresh in the beginning stages is to



play at as many different venues as possible. If everyone is willing to travel a bit, it can be extremely beneficial to look up bands in a nearby city you have never played and set up a show swap.

Show swaps are one of the most valuable tools for establishing lasting relationships in your music scene. A show swap is when one band agrees to allow another band (usually from a different area or fan base) to open for them in exchange for a reciprocal gesture. Obviously, you need to have the means to offer some kind of opportunity in return, but if you approach the situation in a professional manner, it should not be a problem. It works best if you already have an opportunity set up in your area with a venue you trust. It may seem like a small gesture, but most bands love the idea of showing up to an event they did not spend any effort on arranging. As long as you can provide them with a satisfying experience, opportunities will flow both ways.

Making friends in your community, whether they have legitimate connections or just appreciate the local music scene, should be a continuous activity for any aspiring artist. Networking should be just as important as songwriting, and quality business cards are a great way to end a conversation. An excellent resource for cards is MOO.com, even though they are significantly more expensive than their competition. The reason I continually use them is that I have seen the difference it makes. People truly appreciate quality when they see it. Even when they are not looking for quality, they will recognize the extra effort and respond accordingly. Having business cards on hand at all times is an absolute must. Whether it is the random person sitting next to you on a plane or the CEO of Universal Music, you will be happy you had an impressive business card to give them. If not, you will regret having to write your number on a napkin.

As important as it is to make as many connections as possible in your network, none of it really matters unless you recognize how to *keep* these friends. In regards to the random people you meet on a daily basis, make sure to reach out at every opportunity to promote the group. The best way to maintain the relationships and reputation that you have worked so hard to build is to make an effort to exemplify a social musician at every public appearance (meaning you commonly attend local events and become involved in the community). Being a model local musician includes acting personable and memorable to everyone in a public situation. Supporting other local bands by attending their shows is commendable, but if you stand in the back corner the whole time you might as well have stayed home. It will speak volumes to fellow musicians if you are standing front row and cheering them on. The power of a united local music scene is astounding when everyone is on the same team rather than competing against each other.

Competition in the music industry can be destructive, and often results from negative, selfish intentions. Except in cases of blatant plagiarism, most competition in music originates from a lack of creativity. Especially in a local music scene, artists benefit from a collaborative mindset. Think of it as if you are part of a massive sales team. In an effective sales department, there should be friendly competition in order to motivate sales. Everyone is working for the same company though, and should be working together towards a greater goal: to improve the company. In the same sense, everyone in a local music scene should be rooting for each other's success and improving the music scene they all share. In the end, establishing a bond within your community will have astounding positive results. Everyone including venue representatives, promotional agents, and musicians will benefit from practicing this mindset.

Another necessary and effective way to maintain your connections is with a mailing list. There are many Email marketing services to choose from, and they all have pros and cons. Mail Chimp is one of the most popular, but what really matters is how you use the service. A mailing list should be used very sparingly; otherwise, people will associate your emails with the other spam that they delete without even reading. A mailing list *should* be a direct link to your most avid fans that they cannot miss (as long as they check their email obviously). Use it to announce new releases and other important news no more than once a week, but preferably closer to monthly.

## CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPMENT

In classical music, the word “Development” describes the middle section of a Sonata. Its purpose is usually to elaborate on the conflicts that the Exposition has introduced, and eventually resolve them. It usually has frequent changes in key, and breaks down the principal themes into smaller increments that are interrelated. Likewise, in this thesis it is important to focus initially on the topics introduced in the first two sections in order to properly approach the concepts in the Development.

### Booking

Establishing good relationships with the various booking representatives and venue owners in your area is essential for a local band’s success, but it is often difficult to get an initial response from them. Working as a booking representative can be an incredibly frustrating job. Chances are, they get contacted with more inquiries than they have time to read, so before you try to book a show, here are some factors to consider when contacting a local booking representative:

### Do’s and Don’ts

DON’T put a significant amount of information in an email. Their inbox is likely overwhelming, so a long-winded message from someone they do not know is probably going to have a low priority. Keep the email relevant and concise. Include one or two of your best links and/or your press kit so they can easily review in 30 seconds or less. If your official website is well done, it looks very professional to simply link to that, and

also your Facebook page if you have enough likes to be impressive (2,000+ locally or 10,000+ nationally).

DO respond to the booking representative promptly when they reply. Most booking reps delegate their work into sections including booking, promoting, and various other tasks. Some of them only confirm shows once or twice a week, so it is helpful when they get immediate responses from bands. They are used to tedious, long-winded, back and forth conversations, so when they experience a band that communicate professionally and concisely they appreciate it. Sometimes this process can be more complicated than it seems, such as when you are putting together a multi-band lineup and the other bands have not confirmed. Booking reps have deadlines, so it is always better to keep them informed even if the information is “I’m still working on it; I apologize for the delay.”

DON’T confront booking representatives in a negative light. Even if a show scheduling was mishandled on their account, they should be the ones to address it. I have had some terrible experiences with booking reps confirming a show and then canceling on us after they realized they accidentally double booked (meaning that they previously promised the date to a different band and forgot). It is actually possible to turn these debacles into an advantageous situation by passively suggesting they make it up to you with a future opportunity, such as a festival spot or opening for a major touring act.

DO figure out what the preferred communication method is of every venue’s booking representative. Some prefer email. Some prefer texting. Some prefer Facebook messaging. Sometimes it may seem like booking representatives are ignoring you for months, but there can be explanations. For example, a particular booking rep may only book via text. It is not an unusual question to ask about their preferred communication

method, and they will most likely appreciate your concern and understanding of their job. This will help you *maintain* the relationships you have worked so hard to build.

### Talking in Person

Talking to a venue representative in person comes with a set of rules and customs and is something that takes time to perfect. Once you get used to the process, it is usually the most effective way to book shows at a new venue. Sometimes you will be relegated to an email address to contact, but the act of showing your face will stick with them in a positive way if you do it right.

The most important rule to follow when talking to a venue rep in person is to visit on an off night. There is almost nothing more off-putting to a venue rep than a relative stranger trying to promote their band when the rep is trying to manage the venue on a busy night. Monday through Wednesday is usually a safe bet, but venues can be different so do a little research before you walk in uninformed.

The next thing to do is ask a bartender or any employee that does not look too busy if the booking representative or manager is not around. You can always leave a business card with them, but that usually will not lead to contact. Ask when they will be around and return then. When you do get a chance to speak to them, quickly introduce yourself, explain why you are there, hand them a business card, and thank them for their time. One great way to start on a good note is to order a drink before you ask to speak to anyone. The head bartender is usually very close to the manager (often times they are both), so spending money at their establishment is a way to break the ice and not appear like you are only there for your own personal benefit. It also looks good to stick around for a bit after your conversation to solidify the memory of your being there.

## Playing for Exposure

At first you may receive show offers that do not promise any kind of payment other than exposure. If you are just getting started, these shows should usually be accepted. However, once you have proven yourself locally and have a following, playing simply for exposure can be a waste of your time, and also lead to unhappy band mates if they had to spend time and resources for a subpar show that had no crowd. By no means am I saying that you should always rule out unpaid shows. Some of the best connections we have made have come from playing charity shows, or larger events that promised nothing more than gas money. You can usually tell ahead of time whether a show will be worth playing or not by simply researching the organization or venue that is hosting the event. If you are not careful, you may find yourself paying to play.

## Pay to Play

Pay to play shows have gained such a negative reputation that no one refers to them as such anymore. However, they are still around, and often cleverly disguised as something else. Be wary of bands or other events that require you to purchase tickets ahead of time and sell them yourself. Not only can this be a waste of money if you cannot sell all the tickets, but you will probably end up annoying people and looking unprofessional by selling them yourselves.

## Play to Play

Play to play is a phrase I use to refer to shows that are not necessarily beneficial monetarily, but still feel satisfactory because you had fun doing so. The joy of playing music should be the essence of why you are pursuing a career in such a difficult industry. If you are not having fun playing music, you probably need to move on to something else

that makes you happy. Playing simply for the joy of playing is something that I personally miss at times because of how often I have to play paying gigs. It can feel like a job if you do it too frequently. Jack White recently spoke out about how he misses the days where he had less expectations of how to release his music: “sometimes creating in a closet and never releasing (music) has its advantages,” (Young, 2015). The important thing is to never lose your passion for playing, but understand that at some point you have to figure out how to make some money doing what you love.

### Playing for Money

If your project has reached the point where people are willing to give you their money in exchange for your performance, you have already made it further than the majority of musicians. Being paid to play music is undoubtedly one of the best feelings in the entire world. I remember receiving a check after our first gig. I could not help but smile because it felt like someone just gave me money to have fun for an hour. After the initial fulfillment wears off, it is necessary to understand the process of booking paid shows on a regular basis so you can avoid being underpaid or losing a potential show by asking for too much money up front.

### Always Confirm in Writing

Confirming every aspect of a show in some form of writing is imperative! This includes set times, equipment provided, and most importantly, payment. Technically, you should have a formal contract signed by the venue and the band, but on a local level, it is not common. This is why you should, at the very least, do all of your booking and financial negotiations in writing. Email, Facebook Messaging, and Texting are all usually sufficient to prove the agreements, but they may have less standing in court compared to



a formal contract. Luckily, we have never had a major issue with contract documentation, but on one occasion we did rely on a screenshot of a prior text conversation with a venue representative to prove our promised payment amount. In that case, we were very thankful to have the documentation of the agreed upon compensation amount.

### How Much to Charge

For a first time gig, meaning it is your first time performing for a specific venue, you may need to play for less than your usual fee in order to establish a good relationship for future shows. Depending on location, the average payment for a show can fluctuate drastically. For example, in South Florida it is fairly standard for a band to be paid \$100 per musician for a 3-hour performance, but in Nashville most musicians play for tips alone because the amount of competition drives people to play for little to no money in hopes of getting discovered. This of course depends on your draw<sup>8</sup> and how talented you are, but just be careful not to ask for more than a venue is used to paying. The best way to ensure fair payment, and avoid asking more than a venue's normal budget, is to ask another band that has played there recently about their compensation. Be respectful in your manner of contacting them, and explain that you simply want to clarify because you are not familiar with the venue's normal budget. I have found that it is best to work with each venue on an individual basis. Some pay better than others and your usual fee means nothing to them if they have been given a concrete budget to work with. Always quote your usual fee but explain that you are willing to work with them if their budget is not able to cover it. Some money is better than no money, especially if it leads to recurring gigs.

Recurring gigs are a working musician's best friend. They provide something that most musicians are not familiar with, a dependable source of income. Usually it takes at least a few successful shows to prove that your project is worth hiring on a regular basis. Once you have shown that you can consistently start on time, bring out a crowd of paying customers, and entertain them for hours, you may be able to set up a monthly or even weekly gig. Booking representatives love to utilize this method of booking because it means they can set up their schedule months ahead of time. If you are lucky enough to set up a recurring gig, make sure you keep the venue happy by treating it as a priority in your promotion and professionalism. Venues will not wait long to cancel a recurring gig if they are not seeing consistent profits. The relationship needs to be beneficial for both parties, as would be the case in any business.

Another factor to consider when negotiating payment is whether the venue provides the sound equipment for bands. If they require you to provide your own PA system, you should naturally be able to charge more money for the extra work. Not to mention the fact that they are saving money by not purchasing a system of their own. We usually charge an extra \$100 if we have to provide our own PA because it difficult to transport and set up. Most venues understand this and are accommodating, but it is best to mention this contingency up front so your payment is confirmed in writing.

### How to Use Your Money

Once you have a few paying shows confirmed it is time to decide how to use the money you are making as a band. Of course, you can simply split it evenly between the members, but there are smarter ways to use your money if everyone is willing. The most beneficial way is to put some or all of the payments towards a band fund used for

necessary expenses such as music videos, photo-shoots, pressing of albums, and major purchases like a touring vehicle. You will be very thankful to have money saved when you embark on your first tour. Make sure whoever is in charge of handling the money keeps track of all payments and expenses. Raggy Monster puts 100% of our payments towards our band fund, and splits the tips and merchandise sales evenly between the members at the end of the night.

### Performing

Establishing a good relationship with a venue starts with good communication between you and the management staff. This includes before, during, and after a show. However, once you arrive at the venue there are a few times where good communication can make or break a night.

### Loading In

Once you have reached your destination the first thing you should do is ask the manager about the placement of your equipment. Usually they will just want you to load everything on to the stage, but it is always good to confirm as soon as you arrive. This communication lets them know you are there and you can coordinate with whoever is running the soundboard. Sometimes if you are playing a bigger show, you may be expected to share backline<sup>9</sup> with other bands that are playing. This can be a nuisance, especially if you are not accustomed to using gear other than your own, but it is a common occurrence if you are playing an event where there will be several bands performing on the same stage.

Most venues will ask bands to arrive at least an hour before their scheduled performance time. Adhering to this simple request will go a long way with establishing a

positive, lasting relationship with venues. Likewise, arriving near show time, or even later, can tarnish the opinion of your project and deter booking representatives from future interest. Especially when there are bands playing before you, it is courteous and usually expected that you arrive early enough to support every act. Obviously, there are exceptions with festivals and bands on tour, but it is helpful to make a good impression with other members of the local music scene.

### Sound Checking

Sound checking should be straightforward for any experienced musician, but it is helpful to know the proper way to approach the process. Always arrive when they ask you to, even if it seems earlier than necessary. Make sure you have all of your equipment prepared before the show starts. To ensure the best sound possible, every instrument should be run through the soundboard via DI (Direct Input) or a microphone. Unfortunately, at smaller venues they often do not bother running everything through the soundboard, which is just something you will have to manage.

Ideally, you should have a conversation with the sound person before you sound check to explain exactly what your band needs and specify any requirements you have that are not normally expected (extra reverb, how many microphones, monitor levels for each member, etc.). A great sound engineer should ask these kinds of questions, but those are few and hard to come by until you are playing bigger venues.

The more realistically you perform during your sound check, the more accurately the sound person will be able to set up the board. Once each member's levels have been established, make sure to play a partial song as a full band so the levels of everyone playing together can be assessed. It can also be helpful to have a friend or someone you

trust to stand in front of the stage to hear from the audience's perspective. Just do not give away too much of your show contents if there are already people in the crowd.

### Etiquette

No matter what level your project has achieved, you will inevitably encounter issues that will need correction. It is very important to maintain your composure and exemplify the proper etiquette expected from professional musicians. Of course, we have all seen the immaturity portrayed in the media's depiction of rock stars, but in most cases they did not behave in that manner when they were working their way up to star status.

Technical issues such as equipment malfunctions and broken cables are common and very frustrating. Be sure to prepare for these problems by bringing extra cables and backup instruments if you have them. You do not want to find yourself in a position where you are not able to perform due to technical issues. It is embarrassing and detrimental to your project's reputation with both the venue and your fans.

Personal issues between band mates or with venue employees will arise, and sometimes it will be around the time of a show. Working with several people in the setting of a music venue is stressful, and emotions can easily get out of hand (especially if alcohol is involved). The most important thing to remember is that these issues should never be visible to fans. Even if everything that could possibly have gone wrong has gone wrong, your fans should not suspect a thing. A calm, collected composure will not only impress your fans, but it will also help the other band members remain professional as well.

## Playing According to the Venue/Crowd

Learning to gauge your performance based on your current environment is a valuable skill to have once you are playing shows in drastically different venues. For example, it would not be wise to play the same way in a coffee shop as you would in an arena. Contemplating the following four aspects before a performance will prove beneficial:

### #1: Audience

Your audience is ever changing, so your performance should account for the variation. For example, if you are playing to a room full of avid fans, you may want to break out some more obscure songs that they have not heard before in order to provide them with a new, memorable experience. On the other hand, if you were playing to a crowd of people who are unfamiliar with your band, it would be wise to play all of your most popular songs. You should also consider the age, culture, and perceived musical taste of your audience before the show begins.

The acoustics of a venue can have an incredibly dramatic effect on your sound. Small rooms can provide an intimate environment that brings the performer and audience closer, whereas large rooms separate the crowd from the performer in a way that enhances a more dramatic show. Writing the set list should cater to the venue, specifically with the acoustics in mind.

### #2: Volume

For the most part, if you are playing to an older crowd you should keep your volume at a lower level. Several times we have had to turn down at the request of an elderly patron, occasionally even at an acoustic duo performance. Usually this only

occurs at venues where there are people who did not come for the live music, such as restaurants, coffee shops, wine bars, etc. Preferably, the ideal volume is set before the show begins, but an awareness throughout the performance is helpful when factors such as crowd demographics and the number of people in the room are constantly changing.

### #3: Set list

Make a new set list for EVERY show for two reasons:

First, the best fans that come to see you often will appreciate the variety in your performances. Changing up your set list, even if it is the same songs in a different order, will keep things feeling fresh for both your band and your fans.

Second, it can be very beneficial to think about the way your songs flow together. For example, if you play a couple intense songs back to back, it might be a good idea to break them up with one that is more chill in between if you are playing at a venue where you do not want to overwhelm the audience, especially if they are seeing you for the first time. On the other hand, if the venue were filled with people who would be more interested in intense songs then you would not want to bring the mood down with chill songs. Song order depends on different factors that you should consider when making the set list. In addition, if you are conscious of the overall vibe in the venue throughout the performance, you may notice times where you should change up the set list in the middle of a show. The art of writing a set list gets easier with experience, but awareness of its importance is key.

### Stage Presence

Having great stage presence is something learned from experience. Most people are noticeably uncomfortable the first few shows they play. This is completely natural,

but it can be hard to overcome for some artists. Even if you are trying to portray a mysterious or anti-social persona, you need to be able to communicate with the audience enough for them to feel engaged. Julian Casablancas, the lead singer of The Strokes, has admitted to having terrible stage fright, but he has found a way to convey a powerful stage presence by embracing his nervousness instead of trying to hide it. Watch a video of The Strokes performing and it is clear that he is uncomfortable, but he somehow makes it an endearing quality.

If possible, a more engaging method of connecting to the audience is preferable. Examples can include referencing individual people in the crowd, or giving a shout out to the host city. Always thank the venue and its employees before the end of the show.

Lighting can also be extremely helpful to boost your stage presence. Not only will it give you more of a dramatic appearance, but photos will appear better with appropriate lighting (Kamin, 2013). Many venues do not have effective lighting built in because it is expensive, so it may be beneficial to supply your own. That does not mean you have to buy expensive equipment. Sometimes you can find unique, inexpensive lamps and spotlights in thrift stores. Christmas lights work well too. Having creative lighting will make your project easier for people to remember. Decorations can also improve your stage presence. Anything can work, and if you are having trouble coming up with ideas, just remember Google and Pinterest are excellent sources.

### Connecting to The Audience

Connecting to the audience is achieved in many ways, and practically every successful musician has learned how to do so in their own way. For some it is physically interacting with the crowd by talking to individuals, telling stories, asking questions, and



things of that nature. Fans love hearing you talk about your music, so make it a point to talk briefly about things like interesting song lyrics or funny touring stories when it feels appropriate. Be careful not to lose their engagement by talking too long. Small noisy venues can be difficult to hold an audible conversation at times, so use your best judgment.

### Looking the Part

Stage presence has multiple elements that should be combined in order to be the most effective. Aesthetics are equally important as engaging with the audience. If you see a band on stage wearing shorts and flip-flops, you may be inclined to assume they are not professional. Unless for some reason you are going for a very casual look, dressing up for a performance should be mandatory. Coordinating outfits with the other band members can be helpful depending on your genre. That does not necessarily mean you need to match, but having some type of generally synced appearance will help the project look more professional. Costumes can also facilitate amazing stage presence if used in the right setting. Raggy has played themed shows before where we all dressed in different costumes and the crowd loved it. Most of the time though, we just wear clothing that matches our music: Dark and Serious.

### Playing as a Unit

Learning to look good on stage should start in rehearsals. Practicing to perform in sync with the other band members will inevitably help you feel more comfortable in front of an audience. Having an awareness of everyone sharing the stage creates a synergy that is always apparent to fans. When they see the band is feeling the music together, they will be inclined to want to feel it with you. Make sure all the band members are well

practiced, and avoid playing songs live until everyone is confident they can play them without making mistakes. When one person is out of sync, it throws off everyone else.

#### After the Show

Always remember that your job is not over when the performance ends. There are still a few rules to follow that will facilitate a better reception from the venue, your fans, and the other bands. When you finish playing your last song there are a few things you should always say before you leave the stage. Make sure to thank the venue/staff, and remind people to tip their bartenders. Always mention the other bands that played before you and tell people to stick around for whoever is next. The last thing you should say should be along the lines of “We have to clear the stage now for [whoever is playing next], but after that come talk to us at our merch table and buy a CD.”

#### Loading Out

Unless you have a crew of roadies, which we can safely assume you do not if you are reading this, moving all the gear off stage should be your first priority as soon as the performance is over. Especially if there is someone playing after you, it is rude to leave your equipment on stage. This can be harder than it sounds though, even when you make a conscious effort to do so. Fans will want to talk to you immediately when you finish playing, which can make it difficult to focus on moving gear. Sometimes it is necessary to tell them politely that you need to move your equipment out of the way for the next band. Often times they are more than happy to help. This simple act could be a memorable experience for a fan, and enables you to know them better.

## Manning The Merch Table

Once you remove the gear from the stage area, immediately go to the merchandise booth. It would be wise to advise every member of the band to do the same. Doing so encourages people to gather around your “store” and purchase CDs, T-Shirts, and whatever else is for sale. Having an attractive merch table with good quality merchandise will boost your project’s income, not to mention the fact that customers will walk away with items that bring more awareness to your project. It is helpful to have someone you trust help manage the table while you play, but always remember that after the show people love to interact with the band. What better way to do so than with your goods in between the conversation?

## Interacting with Fans

Getting to know your fans well can be difficult, especially after a long show, but it is incredibly rewarding to listen to their input. They are a very significant reason for what you are doing, and interacting with them is a great way to hear instant feedback on your performance. Obviously, you cannot become closely acquainted with every person that likes your music, but you should make an attempt to hold an engaging conversation with every person who wants to talk to you after a show. Always ask their name, and try to remember it for the next time you see them because it will thrill them.

## Getting Paid

Once the show is over, it is time to be paid. If you have done everything properly, there should not be any problems. Unfortunately, even with the most meticulous precautions there may be venues that will make an effort to avoid paying you the agreed fee. Even with a legal contract, it still may be difficult to enforce at the time of the show.

For the typical local venue, there is usually no official, written contract. If a venue decides to break the agreement, you may be out of luck. If this happens, usually all you can do is spread the word among other local musicians via social media and avoid booking there again. Pursuing legal action is rarely worth the time or effort, and there is no guarantee of winning. Fortunately, Raggy has never experienced this, but we have known several local musicians who have.

If all goes well, after you talk to the manager or booking representative that pays the artists, you will be paid in cash or check. Unless one of the band members is educated in the field of accounting and taxation, it will become necessary at some point to obtain financial and legal advice, preferably sooner rather than later. For tax reasons, each band member must report their respective share of the income they receive and in one manner or another, each band member can deduct from that income their legitimate costs of creating that income. Complications can be avoided by simply keeping accurate track of both income and legitimate expenses. Legitimate expenses include recording and production costs, advertising, musical instruments, rent of rehearsal space, insurance, and some travel expenses, notably parking and fuel. All of these are tax deductible, and should be documented systematically to ensure accuracy.

Obviously, not all expenses are legitimate deductions. The law requires the expense to be for a bona fide business purpose. If the band is playing a local dinner venue and orders food and drinks, these are not deductible. A simple test is to ask whether the expense is necessary in the ordinary course of conducting the business. Certainly, instruments are necessary. Food and drink would be consumed whether or not you are in

business, unless business takes you far enough away from home that an overnight stay would be required, in which case some meal deductions are usually allowed (IRS, 2015).

### Recording and Releasing an Album

In many ways, recording an entire album is not lucrative in the modern music industry that is dominated by singles. It may be smart to start with a single to get things moving and to have something professional to send to booking reps, etc. However, recording an album is an invaluable learning experience for musicians. The reason this section is placed AFTER “Performing” is because producing a professional album is an extremely expensive, complicated process that most people will not be ready for until they are accustomed to repeatedly playing their songs in a live setting. Every musician should learn the process of recording in a professional studio, but the costs can be daunting. A legitimate studio will charge between \$60-\$150 per hour, and sometimes much more. After the process is over though, most people will admit that it was worth the money. The question is, how does a broke musician save up enough cash to pay for 30+ hours at those rates?

### Raising Money

There are many different ways to raise money, but it can be very difficult for bands. There is a clear negative stigma with being asked for money, so the key is figuring out a way to pitch the project in a way that people do not see it as a donation. One of the best ways to do that is using a Crowdfunding website.

### Crowd Funding

*Kickstarter* is a groundbreaking website that is a major reason crowd-funding is so popular and successful today. Funding on Kickstarter is all-or-nothing. Potential

investors are not charged for a pledge towards a project unless it reaches its funding goal. When asked what makes it different from all the other crowd-funding options, Kickstarter founder Perry Chen said:

“I wonder if people really know what the definition of crowd-funding is. Or, if there’s even an agreed upon definition of what it is. We haven’t actively supported the use of the term because it can provoke more confusion. In our case, we focus on a middle ground between patronage and commerce. People are offering cool stuff and experiences in exchange for the support of their ideas. People are creating these mini-economies around their project ideas. So, you aren’t coming to the site to get something for nothing; you are trying to create value for the people who support you. We focus on creative projects—music, film, technology, art, design, food and publishing—and within the category of crowd-funding of the arts, we are probably ten times the size of all of the others combined (Davison, 2010).”

Creating value, as Chen says, is the key to getting people interested in your band. A great way to do this is to offer them something more than just music. Videos, T-Shirts, and other stereotypical band merchandise is great, but coming up with something truly unique and interesting to “sell” to fans goes much further for getting people to recognize the value of what they are paying for. It is not just a purchase or a donation; it is becoming a backer of a creative project. A backer feels a sense of relationship towards a project, and is happy to spend money to help.

*Pledge Music* is a crowd-funding website specifically designed with musicians in mind. It releases the funds in three payments (on funding, release, and fulfillment). In

order to receive all of the money, bands must meet their fundraising goal. The sense of urgency this creates helps to motivate fans to back the project. Raggy used Pledge Music for our first album and Kickstarter for the second. Both projects were successfully funded, and I would honestly say I do not have a preference. The important part is creating an attractive page and coming up with unique things to offer fans. Personalized videos, covering a song of their choice, a bowling night with the band, and many other strange options have actually worked well for us. There are great articles for ideas if you search on Google.

### Self Funding

The biggest problem with most crowd-funding websites is the fact that you have to share a percentage of the money you raise with them. For Kickstarter it is currently 5% of your total raised, and another 3% for “payment processing.” Because of these charges, many people have found other ways of raising money and keeping 100% of it. Self funding does not have to come entirely from yourself. It just requires a lot of hard work.

Having a pre-sale of your upcoming release on your website can work very well if you have an attractive website to host a store. This funding method takes some serious planning and web design skills, but the freedom of not going through a crowd-funding website can be helpful. Most big-name bands do not use them, so if you want to look more professional, avoiding crowd-funding sites might be a good idea. In the beginning stages though, it is often the best option.

A band fund is another great option for raising money. Try booking a bunch of shows and getting every member to agree to save 100% of the payments. The money will add up quickly (if you are adequately paid, of course). The problem with this option is

that many musicians who play for a source of income dislike performing without immediate payment. Usually this should not be a problem if everyone knows the money is accounted for and being spent on necessary things for the band.

For more established bands with a proven record of recording and touring successfully, pitching your project to a label can be effective. If they see that you have released albums in the past that made a significant profit, they may be interested. This method can be risky though, because most likely a contract will need to be signed and the offer may not be in the band's favor. Even if a label agrees to pay for the recording and distribution of your album, you will almost always be required to recoup their initial investment before you receive any money.

Asking your rich uncle may sound funny, but I am only half joking. Obviously this calls for a rich uncle, but I am really only referring to asking someone of means you know that may be interested in investing in your project. Someone that cares about you, believes in what you do, and has extra money to spare. If you think about it, you might be able to come up with a few options. It does not hurt to ask. If you do ask, be courteous, respectful, and gracious.

### Recording

The actual recording process can be some of the most stressful times of managing a band. It is expensive and you may not even like the way it is sounding in the beginning stages. In order to avoid a catastrophe, the first step is to find a studio that works well for your sound and budget.



## Finding The Right Studio

Once you have enough money saved to record and press an album (\$5000+), it is time to decide on a studio. The most reliable way to find the right local studio is to ask around your scene. Local musicians will usually have great advice on the studios. Once you have them narrowed down to a few choices, visit them in person.

Meeting the engineer that will be recording your project is extremely important. You want to ensure that you get along and they understand and care about what you have in mind for the recording process. Schedule a time to tour the studio and have an in-depth conversation about the desired sound. It can be helpful to have some examples in mind to give them a reference.

Another aspect to consider when choosing a studio is their equipment. With most legitimate studios, there is no need to worry about them having professional software, soundboard, microphones, etc. The equipment that sets the great studios apart from the average ones is the unique gear. Vintage amps, rare instruments, and things of that nature can be great assets if the project's sound calls for it. They might require a deposit or rental fee for the nicer things, but it may be worth it if their gear sounds significantly better than yours does. If your project leans more towards an electronic sound, you may want to ask the engineer about their capabilities and experience with that side of recording. Writing down questions ahead of time based on the specifics of your project will help the band be more prepared to choose an appropriate studio.

Most studios naturally have great connections in the local music scene. Some may even be able to help outside of the immediate area. This fact may be something to consider when choosing a studio. Asking the engineer or studio manager about their

suggestions for pressing and distribution is a great way to get an idea of their connections. Being aware of potential connections and ways to network should be a constant focus throughout the process of managing a band.

### Home Recording

Recording an album yourself is a very ambitious task, and would not be wise to attempt unless you are aspiring for a raw, unpolished sound, or have extensive experience with self-producing and recording. Acoustic songs are sometimes ok to record in a bathroom or closet for instance, especially if you are only documenting an idea or tracking a rough demo. Successful home recordings have been released many times, including Nebraska by Bruce Springsteen, Exile by The Rolling Stones, For Emma, Forever Ago by Bon Iver, and OK Computer by Radiohead (Kane, 2012).

In order to record at home, some basic equipment is required. A computer, an interface, cables, recording software, microphones, and more can be found in most music stores and online. Musician's Friend is a great resource website. They have good pricing on all kinds of necessary music gear. Another aspect to consider before attempting a home recording is the acoustics of the room. In the end though, the most important thing by far is the performance. No matter how professional the recording equipment is, or how perfect the acoustics in the room are, if the performance is bad, the recording will be bad.

### 7 Tips to Consider Before Recording

Tip #1 - Record rough demos before entering a studio.

Having an idea of how a song sounds in practice and at live shows will help refine the finished product. There may be parts that you notice in demos that need correction. It is best to figure these things out before you are paying someone by the hour. It is a

terrible feeling to have to change a song at the studio in front of people. Finalize every part of the song before entering a professional studio, including solos.

Tip #2 - Learn to play to a click track.

Playing to a metronome seems like it would be an easy task, but many people struggle with it. One person being off tempo on a track could ruin the entire thing. In order to avoid this, practice the songs to a click track until the band is comfortable with the process. This is also a great time to decide on the final BPM<sup>10</sup> for each song and write them down. The engineer will usually expect this information.

Tip #3 - Create a relaxed environment.

Once you enter a studio, the process should be focused, but relaxed. If there is tension or frustration it will show through the recording. Bring drinks and snacks if the studio does not provide them. Our secret for vocals is green tea with honey, lemon, and a shot of whiskey.

Tip #4 - Ensure the engineer understands your vision.

Without a mutual goal for the way the finished product will sound, there is a possibility that the final recording will not be what you expected. If you have demos, show them to the engineer before hitting record, and bring examples of other bands that have achieved the sound you are pursuing. You should also request to hear some of the engineer's prior work before booking studio time with them.

Tip #5 - Always re-string guitars/buy new cords, sticks, and drumheads.

The last thing you want to be worrying about during a studio session is a string snapping or a stick breaking and not having spares. Just in case, it can also be helpful to look up the closest music store and find out their hours of operation.

Tip #6 - Feel the music.

Sometimes it can be difficult in a studio setting to find that sense of emotion that creates music with feeling. Everyone has his or her own methods of getting into the right mindset for performing, and recording should be no different. When we tracked vocals for the more serious songs on Raggy's new album, all of the lights in the recording room were turned off. The blackness eliminated every distraction and the result was powerful. Everyone was forced to focus solely on the sound, and it worked beautifully.

Tip #7 - Do not assume things will be fixed in the mixing process.

If something does not sound right during the initial tracking, fix it. The mixing process should not begin until every member has tracked their parts and is 100% satisfied. With the clock ticking, it is easy to want to move on when a difficult part is "good enough". You may be very disappointed if something does not turn out how you wanted it to sound and you have to listen to it that way forever.

### Mixing

The mixing process includes, but is not limited to, setting volume levels, equalization, using stereo panning, and the addition of effects such as reverb and echo. Especially for a musician who is new to the process, following along with the engineer and offering suggestions is a smart way to approach mixing. The engineer will usually have a better understanding of what should happen during the process, so it is best to let them be in control. Your job is to listen carefully and make sure each instrument can be heard, and that the focal points are mixed in front of everything else. For example, if the band relies heavily on a talented vocalist, it would be advisable to ensure the vocals are

mixed to be louder than the instruments, whereas a weak vocalist can be masked by mixing them at a lower volume.

### Mastering

Mastering is an incredibly important, but overlooked part of finalizing a professional recording. It is a difficult process to explain to musicians. Even professional studio engineers are often not experienced with mastering, which is why someone who specializes in the process should master songs. It is the final step of preparing tracks for distribution. It is also beneficial to have another set of experienced ears listen to your music before it is released. The main difference you will notice is the volume being increased to radio standards.

Before everything went digital, there was a very specific way mastering was done. First, you brought your completed mixes on tape to a mastering engineer who would then bounce them to another tape using different signal processors intended to sweeten the sound. Then the songs were ordered, acetate test pressings made, and then mass production would begin. The process required expensive equipment, and few understood. Now the mastering software is affordable and easy to use. However, that does not mean anyone can do it. The most important part of mastering a track comes from an expert musical ear, not fancy software. Do not ever skip this crucial step of the recording process.

### Merchandise

With music streaming continuing its rapid upward trend in popularity, utilizing every source of income is more important than ever. Independent musicians cannot expect much money from services like Spotify, so having merchandise to offer at shows

is imperative. The usual options such as T-Shirts, stickers, and similar items should be among the choices, but getting creative with band merchandise will yield better results. Offering fans something unique that they will use often, like a water bottle or something personal like handmade art can sometimes be popular sellers. No matter what you decide to have available at the merchandise table, the presentation is just as important as the content.

Making an attractive merchandise table is an art in itself. Using lighting to draw attention and having someone attractive/personable behind the table can work wonders for sales. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the band should congregate behind the table immediately following the performance. If fans want to talk afterwards, why not do so with your merchandise in between?

#### Pressing

Even though CDs are becoming more and more irrelevant, it is still good to have them available at shows. There are many options for companies to use for pressing. Raggy Monster used Discmakers for both of our albums and have had great experiences, but I would advise you research the options because there are so many companies that offer different services. Simply type “CD pressing” into Google and hundreds of potential websites will be revealed. From there it is a matter of satisfying your specific vision and budget.

If the band’s fan base includes collectors, it could prove to be profitable to press to vinyl. It is expensive, but the last few years have seen significant growth in the popularity of vinyl records! For the first time in over twenty years, vinyl sales surpassed 9 million records sold in 2014 (Palermino, 2015). With most music listeners turning to

digital formats out of convenience, the collectors who still appreciate the physical product have returned to the vintage, beautifully raw format of vinyl records. This trend is showing no signs of being temporary either. Vinyl sales have increased by over 220% so far this decade, with each year almost doubling the last (Palermino, 2015).

### Printing

Over the course of managing a band, there will be several occasions where having a reliable printing company available will prove to be extremely valuable. Every local band should have business cards on them at all times. Also, for the more important shows, utilizing old school methods such as passing out flyers can actually be very effective. Especially if the show is outside of the band's local area, talking to people on the street near the venue a few hours beforehand can sometimes be the best way to fill the room with bodies. If there is a local printing company that the band likes, it may be advantageous to establish a working relationship with them. The personal connection may help with prices and turnaround time, and they might even have a design team that can help create a professional looking product customized specifically for your project.

For business cards, the cheapest option will likely be Vista-Print. Raggy used Vista-Print for the first set of business cards we ever made. Unfortunately, we found their quality to match their incredibly low prices, so the next time we tried out MOO.com. MOO's prices are significantly higher than most companies are, but the quality is incredible. Their philosophy on the purpose of business cards matches what we have found to be true: nicer business cards have better results. After EVERY conversation you have with someone about your project, they should receive a card from you, and they will

be less inclined to throw away an impressive one. For this reason, the higher quality is worth the extra money.

For stickers, MOO has some good options, but there are better companies that have more options for customized stickers. You do not want to skimp on stickers because the intention is for fans to proudly put them somewhere that other people will see them.

For T-Shirts, there are so many good companies that it is hard to suggest one specifically as the best option. Inevitably, there will be a few people in your local scene that do shirt screen-printing. If none of them satisfies the band's budget or style though, countless online companies do an exceptional job. Just to name a few: Custom Ink, Terminus Tees, CafePress, SpreadShirt, and Zazzle have reasonable prices for high quality shirts. Raggy has used Custom Ink and Terminus Tees in the past and found their customer service to be impressive.

### Paying

Once the band starts selling merchandise, it is important to offer people the option to pay with cash or card. Accepting cash only is risky, especially if someone other than a band member is running the merchandise table. For this reason, it is important to utilize some sort of credit card payment system. The easiest option by far is Square. Many local businesses have abandoned the outdated format of credit card processing companies due to Square's impressively easy and aesthetically beautiful products. There is no charge to register, and they ship you a free card reader that plugs into your smart phone. All they ask is a 2.75% fee from each purchase (For a \$10 CD they would take 27.5 cents). Remember though, the amount of extra sales from people who do not carry cash will more than make up for this fee.



## The Three C's

### #1. Creating a Legitimate Business

There are countless people that play music, but as soon as you are paid for what you are doing, you are technically running a business. Registering your band as an LLC is beneficial for many reasons. It is important to put a layer of protection between the individuals involved and their personal liability. The fact is, anyone can technically be sued for anything they do. It may seem unlikely that legal issues will arise, but registering the band as a business is a preventative measure that should be a priority as soon as you begin consistently being paid for performing. Be sure to keep track of all expenses such as gas mileage, hotels, meals, etc. Be careful about exaggerating costs, and there are specific rules to follow, but you can legally treat them as business expenses. Many artists do not think about it that way, but being a working musician has just as many costs as most professions.

Another reason to register your project as a business is so that checks can be made out to the band rather than an individual. Legalzoom.com is the option we chose because of time restraints, and it took about 30 minutes to register and another week until the paperwork came in. Once again though, it is almost always better to seek professional legal council if you can afford the expenses and time.

In most cases, it is advantageous to register for a fictitious name. The owner of the name can be the LLC, so it is best to create a legitimate business before taking this step. Unless you plan to operate under “[band name] LLC” (which no one does), registering for a fictitious name is technically necessary. The easiest way is online (we

used Sunbiz.org, but it depends on your location. A simple search online will reveal the best option for your situation.) \$50 and 10 minutes later you will be finished.

## #2. Choosing a Performance Rights Organization

Regardless of whether or not you want to remain independently managed, it is still necessary to affiliate your music with a Performance Rights Organization if you want to receive the proper payment. PROs are “societies responsible for collecting income on behalf of songwriters and music publishers when a song is publicly broadcast” (Songtrust, 2015). Basically they keep track of the money artists are owed from royalties earned when their music is played on TV, radio, and even public uses such as in a restaurant or club via streaming services like Spotify and Pandora. Most of the time artists are owed much more money than they would expect, and there is no way to know other than registering with a PRO. The three choices in the U.S. are ASCAP (The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.), and SESAC (not an acronym).

ASCAP is the oldest of the three American PROs, and are the only one created and controlled by composers, songwriters, and music publishers. It is also the PRO that represents Raggy Monster. For a onetime fee of \$50 through websites like CD Baby or Tunecore, it is incredibly easy to become one of the 500,000+ members (Songtrust, 2015).

BMI was originally founded by radio executives as a nonprofit, and is now the largest of the three PROs (650,000+ members). It is free to join as a songwriter, and pays royalties quarterly. You also do not need a publishing company to collect royalties through BMI, whereas with ASCAP it is necessary (Songtrust, 2015).

SESAC is significantly different from the other two PROs because it is invitation only. Because of this, they have a much smaller clientele (30,000+) and claim to be “the fastest growing and most technologically adept of the nation’s performing rights companies” (Songtrust, 2015).

Choosing the right PRO for your specific needs requires a bit of research, but considering the fact that your choices are between ASCAP and BMI (unless you are invited to join SESAC), your decision won’t really make a significant difference in your income until your music is receiving major international airplay. We chose ASCAP because they claim to collect significantly more money, pay their members faster, and we liked the fact that their members represent them.

### #3. Contracts

The last of the “Three C’s” is perhaps the most important, at least when it comes to protecting your intellectual property. Contracts, no matter the size, should always be read thoroughly by the entire band, and preferably someone with extensive knowledge of entertainment law. A lawyer works best, but they can be expensive, and sometimes even complicate a contract signing that should not be overanalyzed. Contracts for performance/payment agreements are straightforward enough that a thorough reading will prevent any problems from arising (as long as both parties uphold their end of course). Once you start dealing with more significant, long-term contracts is when professional legal advice should be considered. Publishing, recording, and *especially* management contracts should be taken very seriously. One of the main things to keep in mind, especially with publicity campaigns, is maintaining control over budgets and the right to cancel without cause on short notice. Any time you are permitting someone other

than the band members to represent you and your product is when legal advice is imperative, particularly if the agreement is long-term.

The legal section of this thesis could be much more in-depth, but for the sake of composing the information towards a musician's perspective I will practice brevity and suggest reading Paul B. Ungar's website<sup>15</sup> for more information on legal topics you may encounter. However, in important situations such as signing long-term contracts, professional legal council should always be involved.

### Preparing for The Release

If you intend on releasing an album anytime soon after recording is finished, it is necessary to begin preparing for the release during the mixing process or even sooner. At the very least, start thinking of ideas and writing them down. Factors such as booking a realistic release show date, an appropriate venue, and supporting acts will need to be locked down a few months ahead of time.

### Choosing a Date

DO NOT confirm a date before the album is sent off for mastering. By that time, you can know with confidence that the project is almost finished. Many bands make the mistake of booking a release date out of impatience and then end up rushing the process when an unexpected delay arises. Keep in mind that even after the recording, mixing, and mastering is finished, there is still album artwork, liner notes, pressing, and any promotional releases you intend on facilitating the album with. One of the most important and time consuming is a music video.

## Music Videos

In the modern music industry, music videos have always been an important part of the promotional process for musicians. In the last few decades that fact has only become more prominent. The goal should be to create a video that not only showcases the music, but also entices people to want to share it on social media. In order to achieve this, it may be helpful to sit everyone down, (possibly including some friends or family with creative minds), and having a brainstorming session.

Brainstorming should be more than just a group of people sitting around talking. It should have a clear direction that requires some initial planning before the group sits down to talk. Write down the main topics that need to be discussed, such as which song to use, a realistic budget, who will film/edit, and what kind of music video it will be. Some videos could easily be done in one day, such as a performance shoot. All that is really needed is for the band to lip sync and perform to the song being played over a loud speaker. Multiple angles and separate takes can be enough to make a decent music video if that is what your budget calls for, but quality editing is always essential.

Once other elements are added to the video such as props, renting equipment, and hiring a professional video company, music videos can be incredibly expensive. In the end though, they can be the most effective way of separating your project from other local bands who have not gone through the process. Reaching out to a local art school's film department may be advantageous. Often times there will be a handful of talented students that would love to donate time to an established band on a video project because they have an assignment to complete. They often regard it as great experience, and may even do a better job than a professional company. The fact is, it is much easier to get the

attention of local publications and blogs with a well-made music video, not to mention how much it can help with booking shows when it is included in an electronic press kit.

Conceptualizing viral potential should be the starting point of brainstorming ideas for the music video. Ideally, the finished product has qualities that make people want to share it with their friends. Word of mouth has always been one of the key aspects to getting your music heard. Currently this is almost entirely done via the Internet and social media websites. Coming up with a concept that makes the video stand out is essential. Otherwise, the only attention it receives will come from fans and friends that already know and like the band.

YouTube is the number one search engine for music, which clearly indicates its importance for bands. Solveig Whittle recently wrote an interesting, well-written article that outlines the elements that make modern videos go viral, which you can find on his website (Whittle, 2015). In it, he reviews three videos that have achieved viral success in the past few months, and analyzes what they have in common. He narrows it down to five elements that help videos go viral. However, a couple of them do not apply towards most musical projects in my opinion, so I have personally reviewed several of these types of articles and created my own list:

“Five Elements Every Viral Video Has”

#1- Relatable, Inspiring, Realistic Emotion.

People watching the video need to be able to feel the happiness, sadness, anger, pain, or whatever sentiment the video is intended to exemplify. Inspiration comes from within, but is usually a result of external forces. The video should inspire the viewer in

some way, whether it be uplifting or even sometimes offending. If they cannot relate to the video in some way, they simply will not care enough to share it.

#### #2- A Compelling Thumbnail.

According to MedicalDaily.com, the average human's attention span has recently dropped to 8 seconds, due to the increase in popularity of digital content and technology (Borreli, 2015). Because of this fact, it is imperative to capture the attention of viewers BEFORE they even click on the video. Sometimes the most controversial or shocking videos go viral simply from having a captivating thumbnail and title. This means that the picture should be eye-catching, and entice people to click on it.

#### #3- Relentless, High Quality Social Media Presence.

Days before the video goes public, begin reaching out to as many relevant Facebook pages, blogs, music labels, email lists, and anyone else that might be interested in sharing or promoting the video. Especially once the video goes live, a constant social presence is key to propelling a video further. Find ways to post multiple times a day without it seeming repetitive. Sharing a blog post or review of the video every few hours can be effective, but also potentially tire followers out and kill the page's reach.

#### #4- Effective SEO (Search Engine Optimization).

Tagging the video with as many relevant words as possible will increase its chances of being found by people who are searching for similar topics on Google, YouTube, Facebook, and anywhere else online that has a search bar. Put the most important keywords first, and spend a good amount of time thinking and researching relevant topics that should be included.

#### #5- Meticulously Well Executed Timing.

This is probably the component independent musicians struggle with the most because it takes a tremendous amount of planning, money, and knowledge of the business side of the music industry, none of which are the typical musician's strong points. Even a highly produced, engaging, well-shared video can "fizzle out" if it is not released with other features. This is what is meant by "well executed timing". Ideally, a music video should be released in conjunction with (or slightly before) an album or new single. The steps that this requires can be extremely overwhelming, and almost impossible without the help of a network of people. The key is to begin planning and saving money way ahead of time. Some publicity campaigns can be over six months long. With big name artists, the process can even be much longer than that. What matters is that you reach out to your entire network (meaning every single fan, family member, friend, connection, etc.) to help kick start everything at the same time.

#### Promoting

Writing a press release for the new album and/or music video should be taken seriously. This is what you will be sending out to publications, labels, fans, and anyone else that you want to inform of a new release. Keep it simple, and only include the best content. Avoid sounding pretentious, include a link or two, your best high-res photo and video, a shortened biography, and the band's most reliable contact information. Avoid using fancy fonts/colors, and make sure to proofread everything to ensure there are no typos or grammatical errors. There are many templates and articles available online, so do not be afraid to utilize them.



Flyers may seem like an outdated format of promotion, but they simply are not. Having a few hundred printed up to hand out and post around town to promote the album release/show is a great way to raise awareness of the band and the event. In addition, a great way to boost attendance is by getting your street team involved and handing out flyers around town on the day of the show. Not only will this make the members of the street team feel special, but they will inevitably be in attendance when the band goes on stage. Make sure to have two sizes printed. Large prints for hanging in windows and signing/selling at the show, and small ones to be stacked around town and given to people walking by.

Always utilize local publications for promotional purposes. They may even have special discounts for local businesses that can help the band stay within budget. If there is not a local magazine or paper that features live music, promoting in print may be difficult to achieve, but it never hurts to reach out to them. Just make sure that whatever money you spend is being used to showcase the band in a positive way. A small advertisement on the side of an irrelevant newspaper will not bring much attention to the project, and will usually be a waste of money.

Blogs will often be where you see the best response. It does not cost much (if anything) for them to feature bands on their site. The only problem is that there is an endless sea of people who start music blogs. Being featured on most of them will do little, or nothing for the band. Regardless, any press raises awareness so the offers should always be considered. The thing to watch out for is when blogs require payment for a feature on their site. There are a few rare exceptions to this rule, but for the most part, if a website is asking for money to feature your band, do not pay them. Check out their

website and Facebook page, but if it is not extremely clear that they are a legitimate media source with a large audience, they probably won't provide any kind of results that are worth the payment.

### Hiring a PR Firm

Hiring a PR firm is a risky decision to make as a band. In many cases, musicians end up spending an absurd amount of money for representation and are highly disappointed when the results do not meet their expectations. If for some reason you have a lot of expendable income, you may want to hire a PR firm in the earlier stages of band management. However, most of what they will do for you at that point will be things you can do for yourself, especially if you follow the steps outlined in this thesis. If you do not have extra money to spend, wait until you have extensive experience and can clearly demonstrate a large following in your area before reaching out to PR firms. You also should have a major release ready to go (preferably a new album, single, and music video or two). Most good PR firms will not recommend representation for smaller releases, especially if the content is not entirely new, such as a music video for a song that has already been released on an album. Once you feel like your project is ready to invest some serious money in, the most important thing to consider is finding the right firm for your specific needs.

Finding the right PR firm will take quite a bit of research and sending as many emails as possible. Be careful about hiring a company that will not be able to offer the level of commitment you desire because they already have an extensive roster of clients that are much more well known than your project. Better known PR firms will usually charge more money than smaller, less established ones, and there is still no guarantee of a

successful campaign. On the other hand, be equally hesitant about hiring a small/local firm that will appear just as unknown to labels and publications as you would by reaching out to them yourself. The best way to avoid a costly mistake is by knowing exactly what your needs are from a PR company, and then considering the following list of questions:

1. How many clients do they currently represent?

The last thing you want is to be a small fish in a big PR pond. You need to ensure that your publicist will have the time that is necessary to dedicate to your project. A good number to consider is between a 1:7 to 1:12 publicist to artist ratio (Rogers, 2015). Any more than that usually is a sign that the company is more interested in your money than your success.

2. Where have they received coverage recently?

Especially if you have specific publications in mind that you want to receive press from, make sure the PR firm has actually secured coverage with them in the past. In other words, do not expect a feature in Rolling Stone from a no-name firm, even if they are claiming to be capable of that. Ask for examples.

3. What bands have they worked with that were at a comparable level as yours?

This goes for genre too. Make sure the publicist has proven success with bands that fit in the same category as yours. A good firm should clearly demonstrate a successful campaign with multiple projects on your level and with similar styles. If you are an indie-pop band, do not get excited over a publicist bragging about getting a progressive-metal band on Warped Tour.

4. What publications do they think would be a good fit for your band?

This is a great way to gauge if their vision of your project meets your expectations. The previous three questions can potentially be answered by thorough research of the firm's website, but #4 and #5 will probably require a conversation with one of their publicists. Preferably this should be a phone conversation with the actual publicist that will be directly responsible for your campaign. This way you can establish a more personal relationship, and easily tell if they researched/listened to your project.

5. How often do they send reports and how can you see what publications they have pitched to?

Transparency is very important when you are allowing someone else to represent you. The last thing you want to happen during a PR campaign is for your publicist to rub someone the wrong way when pitching your band, and then not tell you about it. A good PR firm will keep a running log of pitches, feedback responses (even the negative ones), and coverage that the artist can review on a weekly basis.

If you are unsure about whether your project is ready to pursue a PR firm or label, then it probably is not. It is important to have a realistic understanding of how your band will be received by people with influence before you start reaching out for representation. You could potentially generate a negative opinion of your project with a company that may have actually been interested in representing you if they had seen it after a few years of proven independent success.

#### Release Party Location

The location of the release party should be one of the first things that is discussed when the band begins planning the album release. It should be in, or close to the band's

hometown. Try to think of every aspect of what makes a great show. Parking, venue staff, atmosphere, sound quality, and payment should all play a part in the final decision. Most of all though, pick the venue that feels like home. Whichever one is the most commonly booked for your band is probably where the release show should be. Just be sure to work out a written agreement on how the bands will be paid (whether it is splitting the door fee or a guaranteed payment).

### Distribution

Distribution is another essential step to prepare for well before the release date. CD Baby and Tunecore are the two most popular companies, but several other websites provide distribution for bands. Although many of them simply outsource their distribution to one of these two companies (including Reverbnation). Digital distribution through either CD Baby or Tunecore should be worldwide, and on every platform offered. They both give the option to select where your music will be distributed to (Spotify, iTunes, etc.), and there really is not a good reason to avoid any option they provide. As an independent musician especially, it will only have a positive effect to make your music available on every possible medium.

### Supporting Acts

Choosing supporting acts should not simply be based on who will bring the most people out to the show, although that is definitely an important factor. Openers<sup>11</sup> should have a good following in the area, but should also show consistent signs of effective promotion. Ideally, everyone involved in the release party should relentlessly promote the show for at least 30 days beforehand. Often times, the bands that do the best job of this are the ones just starting out. Their passion translates well and they will be proud to be a

part of an album release show. They may even return the favor when they have their own release party.

On the other hand, choose headliners carefully. Just because the night is about your project, that does not necessarily mean your band should play last. Especially for newer acts without a large following, booking a more well known local act to headline your show can be advantageous. The headliner may steal some of the attention for themselves, but if you choose a band that brings a fresh crowd that would enjoy your music as well, you might end up sharing some of their fans.

Another option that sometimes works well for release shows is to bring in acts that are unrelated to music, such as dancers or comedians. Doing so creates more of a special event vibe and keeps the night from dragging on. This can also play well into a themed night, where everyone wears costumes.

### The Night of the Show

On the night of the show, the ideal goal is to break even on the album expenses. Unfortunately, this is usually not realistic, but it is a good goal. Depending on the venue's payment structure, charging an entrance fee is usually the best option. People can be very hesitant with paying a door fee, so it may be necessary to entice them with extra incentives, such as "Free CD with entrance fee".

Throughout the night, make a conscious effort to have an engaging conversation with as many people as possible. The goal is to make the night memorable, and part of that memory should be meeting the band! Other than that, try to relax and enjoy the performance. It can be difficult because of the level of stress that goes into planning and executing a large event, but if everything is planned right ahead of time, the stressful part

should be over by this point. Even if it is not though, do not let the stress be visible. Have a pre-performance huddle with the band, give them a pep talk, and focus on making the performance the best show possible.

### After the Release

Much of this section should ideally be planned before the release. Realistically an independent band manager should be focusing on the essential aspects of an album release before thinking ahead towards more long term, time-consuming tasks such as press kits, licensing, and planning a tour (which should not be attempted until you already have a solid following in your area).

### Press Kits

A quality press kit will be used consistently for booking shows, submitting to opportunities, and reaching out to publications/labels. This includes both electronic press kits (EPKs) and physical press kits (which are much rarer nowadays than they used to be due to the Internet). In reality, every band should create one well before their first album is released. The reason I saved this section for after the release is because many times bands simply do not have enough content to create a proper press kit until they have released an album. It is tempting to reach out to potential connections as soon as you have anything to show, but as I mentioned earlier, first impressions can be devastating if you are reaching out before your content is ready to impress.

For electronic press kits, websites like Reverbnation and Sonicbids offer a great selection of tools and tips to create an effective EPK. Five years ago I would have said that these websites were the most essential for an independent band to begin booking shows in their area, but nowadays it is so easy to create your own website and custom

URL that you can create a customized press kit page on your own website. This can instantly portray your project as being more professional than the average band (as long as you include everything an industry representative could require and make it easy to access). Include your music, a band biography (short and long versions), press quotes, contact information, social media links and hashtags, and downloadable HIGH-RESOLUTION photos that can be used in articles. Other items that may be useful to have on hand are your stage plot, full set list (especially if you are a cover band), and anything else you would want to include to impress booking representatives, managers, and publications. Keep in mind though, that much of this information should not be publicly displayed on your website, so this should all be compiled on a separate page that is hidden from public access without the direct link.

Physical press kits are generally outdated nowadays, but can still be effective in some cases. For the most part though, your precious band money can be spent on things that are more important. Usually physical press kits are regarded as a nuisance and are thrown away. That said, some publications/labels will request a physical copy of your album, so it is wise to have them available, along with an informative one-sheet with basic contact information, your best photo, and a clearly displayed link to your more in-depth EPK.

With either form of press kit though, the most important thing to remember is that it needs to be concise, easy to access/understand, and most importantly, it needs to make your project look professional and stand out from the thousands of others they review.



## Licensing Your Music

Licensing is one of the most profitable areas of the music industry, but it can be difficult to know how to submit or who to pitch your music to. If you are not familiar, music licensing is basically giving someone else legal permission to use your music in TV, film, commercials, video games, or any other form of media in exchange for a fee/royalties. There are thousands of companies that represent artists solely to pitch to music supervisors, radio stations, and the like. Zync Music, Talent House, LipSync, and many more are some companies that cater to music supervisors. Be very careful about signing a contract, especially with a company that you have not heard of. Unless it is one of the bigger names with a proven record of accomplishment with successful clients, you may find yourself wasting money on processing fees and never see any results.

The potential upside to licensing is a permanent source of income. Many artists continue to receive royalty checks for decades after their song is licensed. If you are serious about pursuing this side of the industry, one great way to gain experience is pitching to local film schools, videographers, and anyone else that would be interested in using original music in a project. Even if you have to concede to your music being used for free at first, it may be advantageous in the long run when you have examples to demonstrate your music working well with visuals.

## Touring

Touring in the modern music industry is arguably the best way to make money, but it is also the riskiest. Without extensive planning and experience, a tour can quickly become a money pit that drains a band's funds faster than anything else does. Hotels, food, transportation, and many other aspects need to be calculated into a budget well

before the first show on the tour is booked. In the end though, touring is essential for bands at any level. With physical and digital music sales dwindling, touring now offers bands the most consistent form of income. A successful tour is also considered by many labels to be a necessary requirement of independent bands before they will consider signing them. It takes a tremendous amount of responsibility and motivation to pull off, but if you make it back home with even a small profit, and without the band breaking up, you can consider your project to be more successful than the majority of bands. Many musicians accept that most tours lose money after expenses, but this simply does not have to be the case.

Indie On The Move is an essential website for booking a tour independently (meaning without the help of a booking agent or label). Yelp can be effective too, especially for seeing how the audience enjoys a venue, but Indie On The Move was created specifically for the independent touring musician. They provide extensive contact information and guidelines for how to contact thousands of venues all over the U.S. Everything is organized by city, so you can plan every aspect of your tour based on where you want to go.

They also have some helpful features for saving time (which is a huge bonus considering how long the process can potentially take). Their “Quick Pitch” option is very useful for contacting as many venues as possible. Many of the venues might not even respond the first time you reach out to them, so it is helpful to have the option to send a generic email to multiple venues. Just keep in mind that personally written ones are usually more effective.

Quality booking agents are few and hard to come by, and most of them will not be

interested in working with smaller bands. They usually get a percentage of the shows they book for you, so unless you are making \$1000+ per show, they probably will not be willing to spend the time. On the other hand, if you find a booking agent that is willing to work with less established bands then great! Just be careful about signing contracts, and make sure you maintain the final say before a show is booked. You do not want to end up contractually obligated to a booking agent that is essentially taking a percentage of what you could have easily done for yourself. In the end, you should be paying for a booking agent's experience and connections. If they do not offer a significant advantage in these regards, it is usually in your best interest to remain independent.

### Maintaining a Career

One of the most popular topics discussed among independent musicians is whether to pursue major label support or to continue an independent route. Many musicians focus far too heavily on this though, because in order to achieve success with either route it is *absolutely imperative* to demonstrate the project's potential on your own. In the digital age this means establishing an effective online presence through social media, and developing a distinct following on a level that proves predictable profitability for potential investors.

Major labels do not have time to pay attention to the thousands of unsolicited demos they receive. Nick Gatfield (Chairman & CEO of Sony Music UK) refuses to sign an act unless they have demonstrated the drive to develop a successful project and engaged online community themselves. Until that is proven, he believes the artist won't have the endurance to withstand a career in the music industry, even with the help of a major label. Gatfield predicts that out of the countless submissions Sony Music receives,

they may sign as little as twenty artists per year (Khan, 2013). This is why it is imperative to *properly* lay the groundwork independently.

### Pursuing a Label

Major labels all have the same underlying goal: To make a profit. If you are going to pursue representation, especially by a major label, you must understand that they are a business, and will treat bands like employees. If an employee is not doing a good job and bringing in money for the company, they will usually not last long. The “Big 3”, (Sony, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group), currently control the majority of the market share in the U.S. (64.1% in 2014), but independent labels (any label that is not one of the “Big 3”) have been slowly gaining market share and now collectively hold a larger share than UMG (the largest of the “Big 3”) with 35.1% verses UMG’s 27.5% in 2014 (Statista, 2015).

Before the digital age of the music industry, retailers were the ones who had the most negotiation power with the labels. This was because physical music sales were so heavily dependent on placement in stores like FYE, Best Buy, Walmart, Target, etc. If you go check out the music section of these stores now, you will find a pathetically small area only devoted to the most popular artists and new releases (and FYE locations have been decreasing every year). Interestingly though, a handful of stores that do not focus primarily on music sales, (Starbucks for example), enjoyed an increase in impulse buying resulting in a collective growth of 5.2% in 2014 (McIntyre, 2015). This is largely because music consumers generally regard physical albums as souvenirs instead of the primary form of music ownership. In some ways, specifically for music sales at shows, this fact could be a positive factor for independent musicians, especially if you can accentuate the

feeling of “collector’s value” with your merchandise (signed CDs, limited edition T-Shirts, and other items that are only available for concert attendees).

Despite the fact that major labels’ grip on the industry is loosening, they still have the capability to quickly catapult your career to the “next level” (especially when it comes to widespread distribution of your music). Unfortunately, most labels, including even the smaller independent ones, do not accept unsolicited submissions. This is mainly due to the sheer volume of bands that assume their “big break” will come from mailing in their demo CD with their contact information written in sharpie on the disc. Because of this, it may be in your best interest to pursue a Public Relations (PR) company rather than a label (many of which have their own in-house PR firms).

#### Remaining Independent

Managing a band yourself can be a time-consuming, infuriating, discouraging process. You will experience incompetent booking representatives, negative reviews, countless ignored emails, and many other incidents that may make you want to give up. Many musicians assume that this will all be remedied by signing a record deal, and often focus too much effort on trying to find representation when they should be devoting that time towards bettering their project themselves. Be proactive, practice often, subscribe to as many music blogs as possible, and you will likely find success.

## CHAPTER 4: RECAPITULATION

In traditional sonata form, the recapitulation presents the principal subject matter of the previous movements in a new state of equilibrium. Like the beginning of the development section, the point at which development passes into recapitulation is one of the most important psychological moments in the entire sonata-form structure. It marks the end of the main argument and the beginning of the final synthesis for which that argument has prepared the listener's mind (Jacobson, 2013). Likewise, in this thesis, the Recapitulation is intended to serve an aspiring band manager as a quick-reference checklist to be used throughout the process of developing their musical project into a profitable career. Ideally, in the final, publishable version of this study, this section will be removable and include areas for the reader to take notes and personalize the reading process for their own specific needs.



## CHAPTER 5: CODA

In traditional sonata form, a Coda is implemented when the main three sections create conflicts of key and theme that cannot be completely settled even by the full process of recapitulation. In this case, the movement may be rounded off with a coda, or concluding section. Appropriately, the music industry's inherent ebb and flow causes industry experts to look towards the future in an attempt to stay ahead of the constantly changing trends.

### The Future

Nielsen (The music industry's leading information provider) revealed that in 2014, On-Demand Streaming saw a 54% increase, with 164 Billion Streams. Although overall physical album sales are down as a result, vinyl LP sales are up 52%, and now comprise over 6% of the overall physical album sales (Nielsen, 2014). This trend signifies a distinct divide between casual music listeners and ardent collectors. Because of the ever-increasing popularity of digital music and the increasing expectation for everything to be free, the industry has been forced to pursue new avenues for generating revenue. Although it is impossible to maintain an updated outlook on the future of the music industry in this thesis, the following examples serve as a view of the direction in which the industry is moving as of October 2015.

### Social Streaming (Cymbal)

Music streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music are the hot topic in the music industry as of late, specifically in regards to how artists should be paid. However,



the popularity of these services has given rise to an entirely new form of social sharing. Cymbal is a new application for sharing music that is ingeniously embracing streaming services instead of competing with them. Forbes recently called Cymbal the “Instagram for music” (Tietjan, 2015). If this app catches on and enjoys even a comparable amount of success as Instagram, this could prove to be the future of music sharing. Artists are paid the exact same way through royalties earned from whatever service the song was shared from. The only thing that changes is the method and ease of sharing.

#### Virtual Tipping (Patreon)

Many musicians rely heavily on tips from live performances for their source of income. Jack Conte took this idea, combined it with the concept of crowdfunding, and created Patreon. The biggest difference between the well-known crowdfunding websites like Kickstarter and GoFundMe is that it focuses on artists who create on a regular basis, instead of one big project or album. The consumer decides to tip an artist they are a fan of for each time they release something. This could be a song, music video, poem, drawing, or anything you can create. The more people you get to support your project, the more money you make. It is simple, and many YouTube channels are beginning to follow this format of creation. Instead of relying on the miniscule royalties they earn from Youtube/Google/Spotify/iTunes, they rely on the tips from their true fans. There is definitely a risk the making your content exclusive, but there are quite a few artists on Patreon that are making a living solely from doing so.

### Something Entirely Different (PolyFauna)

The band, Radiohead, has been a pioneer in the indie music scene since their debut, and most famously since they released their highly awarded album “In Rainbows” with no label and for the low, low price of “pay what you want”. They recently did something even more innovative when they released their new mobile application called PolyFauna. Simply put, PolyFauna is a game for smartphones where “Your screen is the window into an evolving world. Move around to look around. You can follow the red dot. You can wear headphones.” It is a truly unique experience, and could be an avenue that future artists could pursue. Instead of sticking to the conventional methods of releasing music, perhaps this idea could make way for an entirely new form of appreciation (as long as no one walks into a busy intersection while using the application).

### Outro

The bad news is the music industry as we have known it for the past century is ending. The good news is, it is making way for a very bright future. A future where passing around mixtapes to friends turns to Spotify/Cyber, and true fans tipping the bands turns to Patreon. A future where Louis Armstrong selling records out of the trunk of his car turns to Bandcamp/iTunes, and a musician getting famous solely from word of mouth turns to Facebook/Twitter/Instagram. Advances in technology have been changing music since the beginning of the human race. Imagine if Mozart had a synthesizer, or if the MP3 player was around when Elvis was swooning girls in the 1950s. The introduction of recorded music in 1878 forever changed the music industry in that the consumer did not have to limit their musical enjoyment to a live setting. The introduction of the microphone and amplified music allowed musicians to whisper melodies to arenas.

The industry has experienced radical changes due to technology, and will undoubtedly continue along that path as long as people still enjoy music.

## APPENDIX

1. Gigging (or Gig): Describes a performance that an artist is paid for.
2. Jamming: The act of playing improvisational music with others.
3. Merch (or Merchandise): The physical products that are sold.
4. Sarcasm: Probably should not be used in a formal thesis.
5. SEO: Search Engine Optimization
6. Rider: A written description of the band's needs, both technical and personal.
7. Stage Plot: A visual representation of the band's layout on stage.
8. Draw: How many people you can bring out to see you perform.
9. Backline: A stage term for the equipment provided for and shared by the musicians (Drums, Amps, etc.).
10. BPM: Beats Per Minute. A measure of tempo.
11. Original Band: Playing mostly music you write.
12. Cover Band: Playing mostly music you did not write.
13. Search Engine Optimization: Maximizing the potential to be found via search engines such as Google.
14. Hashtags: Placing a # symbol before a word on social media platforms in order to link your post with other users' conversations or photos about the same topic.
15. [www.paulbungar.com](http://www.paulbungar.com): An effective resource for most entertainment law topics.

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