



DIGITAL ARTIST'S BUSINESS TOOLKIT

Notes from a panel discussion chaired by Grant Heinrich with artists Mishkin Fitzgerald and Chris T-T at the hub's One Dayer on 12th September 2014

How to make a living as a musician?

- **Kickstarter**
 - Timing and positioning are important
 - Large(ish) and active fanbase
 - Short campaigns
 - Budget clarity
 - Aim lower than you need
 - Small rewards and large tier
 - Do homework on similar projects
 - Family and friends
 - Personal as much as possible
- **Streaming and online retail**
 - **YouTube.** It is the most popular place to hear music. Music videos are the best way to gain fans. Make sure you run your own channel, don't just put videos up. i.e. a profile page that you organise and present professionally. Including videos that fans have uploaded. If you put your music up first, you retain control before others upload it (e.g. if you're not protected by publishers).
 - **Bandcamp.** Transparent; don't take a massive cut; good alternative to itunes, etc.; quality matters; artwork bundles; retain control over pricing.
 - **Soundcloud.** Get a Soundcloud Pro account: great for data. Putting your music in 'soundcloud groups' will build listeners. Gain location information. Who is playing your music, where, in what playlists (Spotify won't do that). Just started paying per stream.
- **Digital aggregation that you trust**
 - To get on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon, etc without label representation
 - e.g. Tunecore.com – one-off fee. Others take percentages. Select global distribution (e.g. ability to avoid Amazon!).
- **Social media**
 - **Twitter.** For constant interaction – but self-marketing is not just promotion. Do talk about things other than your own music. **Tweetdeck** is useful to organise and target connections (e.g. print press, online connections). The future may turn algorithmic, which will be bad for artists who will have to pay to reach followers.
 - **Facebook.** You can be friends with your fans; profile page is just as an entry point. You can get interesting data from this (which you can't get from likes) – and really

personalise your engagement. (There are bits of code in the developer toolbar that will help you e.g. invite people to gigs en masse).

- **Instagram/tumblr** – a personal presence that doesn't feel like marketing.
- **Nutshell** and **Highrise** are great CRM/contact manager tools. (£10/mth) You can manage roles very easily – organise into lists (sync, labels, press, etc)
- It's important to have your name on all new sites, when they appear, so that you can register it before anyone else does and then ride the wave should the service become successful.
- Marketing and personal side can be kept separate – but getting better at the latter will help with the former.
- If you don't like constant SM management, big pushes for a marketing campaign (for particular albums, events, etc) can still work really well.
- Email
 - **Mail Chimp** – data feedback; insist on clean data (for avoiding spam).
 - You can geo-target your contacts.
 - Handwritten email lists from gigs are still one of the best and easiest ways of building up a following – but it can be a pain to make sure emails are correct.
 - A mailing list will be the most effective tool you have to communicate directly to people who actually care.
- Merchandise
 - Unusual, interesting merchandise is good. Homemade stuff, cheap stuff, to sell at gigs.
 - Online distribution: **GreedBag**; **MusicGlue**. They will present, promote your stuff. They take a 10% cut. They can take over the entire merch operation.
 - Get a dedicated merch role (a mate – or even a fan – to represent you at gigs); instead of the awkward merch desk situation.
 - Or there is value to selling your own merch if that suits your personality.
- Think about role distribution more generally – play to individuals' strengths (e.g. the sales role; the social media role...)
- Free download cards – don't necessarily translate into lasting relationships.

Notes by Toby Bennett