

A photograph of a musician with dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt and blue jeans, playing a red electric guitar on a stage. The musician is positioned in the center-right of the frame, leaning forward. The stage is outdoors, with a large, dark, textured canopy overhead. In the background, there are yellow curtains, a drum set, and other musical equipment. The lighting is warm, suggesting an evening or sunset setting. The overall scene is a live music performance.

Marketing your Music

First Steps

Steve Allen

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Preface

This e-book is distributed freely to visitors and friends of the website Marketing Your Music <http://www.marketingyourmusic.net>.

This e-book offers basic information about the first steps you should take in starting your own professional band.

More detailed information about the marketing of the artist or band may be obtained in the e-book Marketing Your Music – Success Strategies available [here](#).

Other e-books by the same author:

[Personal Management in the Music Industry](#)

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The Dream

It's the dream of almost every adolescent to have their own rock band, create new sounds, reach success and everything else that all of this could bring. Screaming fans, respect, autographs, tours, luxury hotels, glamour etc.



So, on one of those sunny days, we waken from this sweet dream and, without the notion that time has passed by so quickly, we're adults, living our "normal" lives, earning just enough bread to get by, doing what our parents always wanted us to do.

I know a doctor who still dreams of having a different life, a life that will excite him... once he confided in me that he would gladly exchange everything that he had built, if he could have the chance to go back to what he loved best, music (he was a guitarist in a heavy metal band).

Where do all these dreams hide?

Now you have your own company, or that job, which in society's eyes is respectable in a good company, and you decide not to let the old flame die. You decide to have a bit of fun and return to "waging a bet" in the music industry.

For you to be launched as a musician, or manager of a band, you will need abilities in business, purchasing, sales, market research, man management, delegation of tasks and be fashion conscious.

All of these actions together make up marketing in the world of music.

For this project, just like in any other business, you will need to designate a quantity which you are prepared to invest. Treat music like any other commercial adventure in your life. Never as a profitable hobby.

A Budget and Business Plan (with a target public defined) are necessary, just as in a "conventional company". This way you will not fall into the trap of making

emotional decisions, diverting your attention from your real objective. Save your sentiments for your music.

To start your band, a “music business”, you will need musicians, instruments (good musicians normally have their own), transport, publicity and a structure to manage your contacts. It doesn’t matter if your objective is to record or perform live; the work involved will be intense.

In the next chapter we will talk about this...

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Thinking about the Product

Before you adventure out at putting a new band on the market, you need to think about the “product” you wish to promote. A new idea, a new song, a different message that will be easily understood, perhaps even create an entire cultural and musical movement, just as the Sex Pistols did, managed by Malcolm McLaren.



Do some market research to see what has already been done. Madonna promoted sex, Boy George promoted the gay movement; Bob Dylan promoted an anti-war movement.

Each one had their style and a different message which was easy to be understood by a specific target public.

These artists were successful not because they were the best musicians around, but because they were the best in terms of marketing.

You remember Madonna sat on a chair, with legs open in the style of Mae West.

Making a prevision about which will be the next movement six months, one year, five years from now, is a fundamental tool in the production of your plan of action.

Don't forget that before those who are successful today, are already in the market. You will need some years to gain your space and you will need to be up to date.

The Musicians

Finding musicians to start a band is easy. After all, musicians make a loud noise and much of the time are larger than life.

Associating yourself with responsible musicians, however, could be a little more difficult. If you are taking your band-company seriously, you will need to investigate at your local Musicians' Union, which is always a good source for professional musicians (this only applies to the United Kingdom where professional musicians are encouraged to join the Musicians' Union. Maybe in other countries, exists something similar like a council of musicians etc.).

Enter in contact with those musicians which match up to your needs.



A good basic formation is a drummer, bass player, lead and rhythm guitarist, and keyboard player.

Normally it's a good idea to make sure that some of them know how to sing. Alternatively look for a vocalist and backing vocals if necessary also.

Of course, if you are part of the band, you will be taking on one of these positions and if your band plays Punk rock, perhaps you will only need to have three members, a power trio.

Pay attention also to the attitude and look of the musicians. Remember: We're not talking about a band made up of friends; we're talking about a business.

Interviewing the Musicians

Hold your interview for the selection of your musicians with calm, asking for the curriculum of each one. Maintaining a good conversation is important.

Ask them to play some runs and passages of tunes that you wish to hear to guarantee the quality of their playing.

It's important that they have the ability to learn new tunes quickly, and that they are versatile, feeling comfortable in playing tunes of different genders.

Negotiate with each one about wages or alternative forms of payment. You could offer a fixed salary independent of the number of shows made, percentage of the ticket sales, fixed price for presentation or financial partnership in the company (band).

These details could be resolved during the interview and put into a contract to avoid misunderstanding later on.

Also make sure that the musicians combine between themselves, in the way they act, their personality and musical style.

The musicians need to be "interesting" (principally the vocalist), having energy and presence. Don't confuse this with beauty.



This is important because later the image of the band will have the same importance as the music.

Remember "The Monkees", from the United States, launched during the 1960s and continuing during the 1970s. The band was formed to compete directly with British band "The Beatles".

The truth is that in the beginning, none of them were musicians, but the image and the message was what were being sold. Music also played its' part but a little later on.

Also, who doesn't remember "The Sex Pistols" from Great Britain? As musicians at the beginning they were terrible, but, once again the message was more important than the music, in their case, being rebellious. The image was aggressive and none conformist.

But anyway, each artist had charisma, or a good visual look and it's this that sells.

Avoid parents and relatives in your selection of musicians. It's only a personal opinion, but family and business don't mix very well.

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Looking for Direction

So you found the components which will form the band and you have decided on the message you wish to send to the public.

Now, discuss with the band, to define deadlines to learn at least thirty songs. Make it so that everybody participates in the decision. Define everything in contract.

If, in the band you are blessed with talented composers, who are producing good songs, within your concept, you are very lucky.

In any case, it's important to remember that there are editors who license rights to music from a data bank of composers.

Before you enter in this part of the business, it's a good idea to read about current legislation in your country about the subject. Once it's understood, you just need to select the music and look for a place to rehearse.

It's always best to look for a good rehearsal studio.

Look around and find the best studios for your needs. You can get good information at the Musicians' Union or on the internet for studios in your region, or perhaps one of the new components of the band knows a good place to rehearse. If the band is formed with experienced musicians, they should know where to find the best and cheapest rehearsal studios in your area.

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Rehearsals

When you start your rehearsals, face them as a fixed job. Eight hours a day, with frequent breaks during the day (or night) so as not to tire out the mind.

Liam Gallagher of the band Oasis insists in rehearsing again and again and again. He's right.

Perseverance, treat the work with respect and sincerity will bring success, so much so that we all know who Oasis is.

Without rehearsals, the band will never play music like a band, only as four or five musicians playing the same song at the same time.

The difference may only be slight, but it's always important to make the extra effort and make your band a little better than the others to stand out that little bit more.

Keep good control of the musicians; avoid drinking alcohol, smoking or taking illicit substances are fundamental. It's your investment which is on the line. Avoid every and any risk before even starting.

Explain to the components of the band the message which you want to send out and work on the theme.

The rehearsal should be treated as a laboratory, so experiment and try new things. Make each member of the band bring four or five new ideas to each rehearsal.

Don't isolate yourself on only one detail; always keep a view of the big picture.

As the "director" you should direct the group and maintain your work schedule, action plan and deadline for delivery.

The Name of the Band

The name of the band should reflect the message that you are sending to your target public. Sit with the members of the band and have a "brainstorm" session, listing ideas and possibilities.

Think of a name as short as possible, with the maximum of four syllables, which has no negative connotation in your or any other language. No radio will play the music of a band called "The Fu***** Bas*****"

It's easier to remember a real word than an acronym. Don't be too explicit in respect of your musical style when you choose the name of your band.

If you name the band "The Fred Dimpsey Rock & Roll Band", for example, and the new musical tendency is folk music, the name of the band will not fit into your new musical style, if that is what you decided to do.

Remember that hugely successful bands, like U2, or The Cure, had to change their musical styles innumerous times to keep themselves in the media. Also you should avoid words "of the moment". Later on that name will appear outdated and consequently the band will also.

Larger companies, when they wish to launch a new product on the market do exactly that. The directors and executives from the marketing department, arrive at a consensus about the name and appearance of said product.

Names need to be easy to remember and attractive to the ear.

When you are down to five or six names to choose from, you can even research your target public, in the local high school, for example, to see which name, to the majority of the students, sounds better.

Also you need to ask what music they expect to hear from bands with the names you suggested.

With these answers you may have a good idea about the names and their influences.

It's important to remember that as registered trade marks, you will need to discover if the name you selected is being used already by another band. Research at the "Band Register of London", or your national public organization that deals with trade marks.

Registering your Trademark

Now, with your name, knowing that there isn't another similar, the time has arrived to register and protect your name and trademark. The simplest solution to do this is to contract a specialized company to do this work for you. There are plenty of companies on the internet. However if you wish to do this by yourself, you should enter in contact with the specific organization your country directly, which should have regional offices in your area.

You will undoubtedly need to fill out forms and declarations of your commercial activity, specifying the services that the trademark is destined to be assigned, who the referred articles or services are owned by, pay a specific contribution as a deposit on the order and deliver this to the organization involved.

The process, not having any problems (like similar names), takes typically around three months. After the payment for registration you receive your "Registration Certificate".

Normally each mark is registered for ten years, and is up to you to renew the registration at the end of this period.



It's important to say that the owner of the band should be the person registering the name of the band, because if, for some reason, a component leaves the band, already with its' name consolidated in the market, this will avoid bigger problems. A case in particular speaks of a vocalist of a band in the 1980s, who, once the name of the band became a strong trademark, registered the trademark in his own name, he left the group and formed another using the registered name.

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Protecting your Music

It's great that you have creative talent to write your own songs! You have an ability which thousands of other bands don't have, a source of original music.

When you create music, be explicit in who actually created the composition. Who wrote the lyrics, who composed the melody. Don't fall into the trap of "the music is by the whole band; let's declare the band as the composer".

You should put individual names. Why? Because if later on in your career you leave the band, you won't have the right to receive royalties of the music. If the song became a huge success, you could lose a lot of money. So it's better for everyone to put individual names.



When you wish to register your songs, take great care! Many composers are not aware of the correct procedure to register and protect their music. For example in the UK you do not need to apply for copyright. It is an automatic right that exists as soon as your work is fixed in some way, for example, published on a CD. There is no register for copyright in the United Kingdom (UK), although there may be in other countries. It is a good idea to mark your work with the copyright symbol ©, followed by your name and the date when you publish your work. Check in your own country as to how you should proceed to protect your work as each country probably has its' own procedure.

Showtime!

You have the members of the band, the name, have composed the music, rehearsed a lot and have now got two hours of good material to present. Now what? Showtime! How do you organize an event? Many people don't understand, but organizing an event is a little more complicated first appears.

Before you do anything, you must do some groundwork.

First you must go to the Musicians' Union (or similar in your country) to regularize the musicians in your band. Whereas it isn't illegal for musicians to perform without being in the union, they will be respected more in professional musician circles.

A public performance of copyrighted music is subject to a licensing fee.

In the United States the money goes to the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP); Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI); and SESAC (once known as the Society for European Stage Authors and Composers) the three major performing rights organizations in the United States. These licensing organizations are none profit-making ventures they act as clearing houses for the fees, passing the bulk of them on to the songwriters, composers and publishers. Once again, each country has its' own organizations.

If you will be playing your own original unpublished music, write a letter to these organizations, declaring that you will be waiving your right to receive royalty payments. Present this declaration with a complete list of songs that you will perform at least a week before the event.

Understand that no one will look for you to perform for your first time. You need to look and find out the places to make your presentations. Prepare yourself to hear the word "no" several times. But don't worry, this is normal for a new band and at the end of the day, it's only a word and eventually with persistence you will hear the word "yes".

You should take with you a CD demo (I'll explain how to do this a little later), a publicity photo and a release of your band. A release is a brief history of your band. It's logic that as time passes your history will grow, but your release is not a history book, don't include things that happened five years ago, include things that happened last year up to the present time and include any future project that you are planning.

When you are looking for places to perform, look for places that fit into the same profile as your music. Of course you won't play Death Metal in a tea room, right? Look for feasible options.

Look at posters and flyers of other bands that share your musical style to see where the real action lies. Discover if the owner of the venue is honest and fulfills their promises.

Lighting and Sound

When you find a venue, the next step is to find sound equipment. Normally venues that have regular events have their own sound equipment. A lot of the time this sound equipment is not very good quality. It's well worth the investment to hire. Try not to be too economical in this task, because at the end of the day, the public will hear your music through the sound equipment that you use.

Many bands make the error of hiring cheap sound equipment and pay a much higher price later, onstage when the music sounds distorted and unbalanced. Look for sound equipment in the local paper, musical instrument shops, recording studios, even at the culture department at the local town hall to find contact telephone numbers and addresses of equipment suppliers. Be careful when hiring.



Many suppliers of sound equipment are not very punctual. Investigate the company that you think you will call to supply the event. Draw a contract stipulating a complete list of equipment to be supplied, deadlines and costs. If the supplier doesn't deliver everything promised and impairs the event, it broke the contract and you will not have the obligation to pay (of course you wouldn't say this until the end of the event!). Many suppliers of equipment have a tendency to arrive late. Be very firm in this aspect.

As well as the sound equipment, you will need to hire stage lighting. The public wish to "see" the music as well as hear. Making a spectacle is making a SPECTACLE, and in many cases, good lighting will transform a mediocre band into a successful band!

In the first presentations of the bands' career, don't think about charging for entrance tickets. The object at this stage is to get the band exposed. The band at this moment needs the public more than the public needs the band, so

exposing the band for free is a way of saying "Hey ! It's us !" and, also in the smaller venues, it's also good to get stage experience as a band.

Showing your band in five free venues in the same region will be sufficient for the public to understand your message, and if the shows were good, the power of mouth-to-mouth will valorize and justify your value and price.

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Before the Presentation

On the day of the event, arrive at the venue early, to resolve small problems that always happen at the last moment, and to run through a sound check.

Normally a sound check for a smaller event shouldn't take more than half an hour to do. The band shouldn't try and play their whole repertory in doing this sound check as the sound engineer, in the majority of cases is, is a very experienced person, and could get annoyed with the pseudo stars' insistence in taking hours and hours to do a sound check. At the end of the day, it's the sound engineer that can make a band sound competent or terrible, because its him that will control the sound during the show.



So it's worth your while to stay on the good side of the sound engineer.

If you need to drink, just water and never less than thirty minutes before you are due to go onstage. There is nothing worse than going onstage just to need to run to the bathroom !

Staying together during the time before the presentation, so that everybody knows where everybody is, is a recommendable attitude to take.

Take time out to tune your instruments before going onstage. The public don't want to hear a group tuning their instruments; they want to hear your music!

After the event, thank everybody involved with the event. Sound engineer, security, venue manager, journalists etc. Look into their eyes so that they will remember who you are. In the music business, knowing people is fundamental.

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Publicity

Publicity needs to be made. You could do this by distributing flyers when you are booked to play at a venue. Distribute flyers at local high schools and bars, which have your profile of public.

Call the local press. Offer them a demo CD, a publicity photograph and a release of your band. The journalists use the release as a reference in their news piece. Normally journalists have pleasure in helping new bands by writing a piece in the newspaper about the event.

There are a lot of "press agents" that offer their service of placing articles in the newspaper, but at this initial stage I believe that it would be better if you did this work personally to cultivate a good direct relationship with the journalist. You could answer questions and say personally a lot more about your band than a third person who isn't a member, or a sheet of paper telling a brief story.

I mention the press because history has shown the value of this tool in musical promotion.

Study interesting cases of success to find creative tools to publicize your trademark.



Britney Spears, for example, maintains a telephone number where people can call and hear her music for free.

Marisa Monte presented her show mostly for free during a year, in smaller venues where journalists and influential people normally gathered, to generate a name for herself, before she was released to mass media.

Recording a Demo

When you look for a studio to record your demo, remember that bigger doesn't always mean better.

Get to know the profile of the studio. If for example the studio normally records classical music, perhaps it will not be the best place to record Heavy Rock.

Don't be fooled by a studio that brags about its' forty eight track table, because for the majority of small band cases, you will end up paying for something you will not use.



What's important is the recording equipment and good microphones (that are not stage microphones, like Shure, but are studio microphones, like Neumann).

Recording is a lot of fun. But the majority of people don't realize that the most of the work in the melodies, arrangements, voice intonation etc. is done away from the recording studio. Use your rehearsal room as much as possible, to minimize the amount of hours spent in the recording studio.

Music Producer

When you decide to go into a recording studio, contract a music producer. I know that it seems extravagant, but, in general context, it's a lot cheaper than not doing so.

- The producer will supervise the sound engineer, who sometimes will act very slowly if you are hiring the recording studio by the hour, or will try to take shortcuts if your deal with the studio is based on a complete work.
- The producer will guide you through the recording process during your recording and consequently you will pass less time in the studio.
- The quality of the recording will be better because the criteria of the producer will be far superior than somebody who is euphoric when they are recording.
- He doesn't have a close relationship with the band, and so his critics are worth more than someone who is a member of the band.
- At the time of mixing the tracks, the person who will have the final word is the producer. This is important as there are a lot of musicians who during this stage of recording complain because they cannot hear sufficiently "their sound". Instead of mixing the tracks for the good of the music they prefer to mix the tracks for the good of their ego.
- He has higher criteria for failures in the recording (strange noises, bleeding from one track to another etc.).
- The producer will economize you more money than the cost of his fee!

A producer is not a friend who just wishes to be noticed. He is a professional.

Look in the Musicians' Union for a list of music producers in your region.

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Submitting Your Demo

Today, 80% of sold music is produced by independent recording companies. Only 20% is produced by the majors like, Sony, BMG Airola, Warner etc.

If you wish to send your demo to the larger companies you need to follow some rules:

Try and be different in your presentation – nothing too extravagant, but with a good idea to make the music executive open your envelope, which will be among many others on his desk.



Your CD should be labeled with the names of the songs, your name and contact telephone number. Use a computer program to make the label and stick it firmly on the CD.

No executive will listen to your music for more or less four seconds, if your music grabs their attention immediately. For a demo, avoid lengthy introductions to songs.

Send a professionally taken photograph of the band, but nothing too eccentric. The executive needs to see a photo to help him decide if he can sell you visually as well as musically. The photo should be well taken, well composed and should say something about your musical style.

Send a release. You don't have to explain everything about your music and its' politics, because the executive has ears and will discover for himself. You could say that your sound is like that famous band. This will offer the executive a starting point. Never say that your music cannot be labeled or is totally unique. Include current projects, where your next presentations will be, if you are producing your own music, if you as a band are stable, the address of your web site and your telephone number – in other words be objective and sell yourself!

Independent Production

For your first CD, you could consider an independent production. It's a relatively cheaper way to market your band. Remember even the Beatles recorded an independent song to begin with!

Making your independent CD will open the first doors in specialized radio stations that play your musical style. For this to work, as the majors do, DEFINE which song you will use as your song to be worked on the radio. Make sure that this music is at the most three minutes long (better still if it was only two minutes and a half).

In the case of independents, don't keep on changing your song to be worked on the radio. The professionals who work in the radio station will not take you seriously.

Remember: Let the professionals who work in the radios, television, press and recording companies shine as professionals. Be a professional in your internal environment, but don't push this onto these people. Believe me, this will speed things up for the better.

Good Luck!

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