

**LEEDS
COLLEGE
OF MUSIC**

Music Business Guide

***marketing
new artists***

3 Quarry Hill
Leeds LS2 7PD

www.lcm.ac.uk

marketing new artists

Mick McCarthy

Mick McCarthy works for Dance to the Radio Records, and is currently the manager of successful Leeds band The Pigeon Detectives. Dance to the Radio is a Leeds based record label and was formed in early 2005.

traditional and new methods of marketing

Since the birth of the Internet, marketing methods have changed. Traditional methods (indirect marketing):

- Press, radio, television and general advertising

New methods (direct marketing):

- The internet, particularly websites such as MySpace

The music business has been trying to catch up with these changes and how it relates to marketing both new and more established artists.

Bands are able to use the increase in direct marketing to their advantage as they can talk directly to their fan base before they even have a record deal. This has cut out the necessity for a more traditional marketing platform in order to reach an audience. However, in order to have long term success, the band need to have a strong marketing strategy combining both direct and indirect marketing (radio, press, TV, online and club pluggers as well as advertising).

The traditional record deal puts indirect marketing completely in the hands of the record company. Marketing costs are not recoupable under this model (recording and touring costs are recoupable from a band's record sales), and so unless a minimum figure is set in the recording contract, then there is no guarantee that a label will put an effective amount of money in to support a band's marketing campaign.

Record labels usually base the amount they spend on marketing on the estimated number of records that each artist will ship to the shops. Managers do not have any control over how much money the label invests in marketing their band.

Due to the rapid decline in physical record sales, the music industry is looking at different models to break and market new artists. Many record labels are trying to increase their overall income from bands by taking a cut from gig income and merchandise – two income streams usually outside the realm of a record label. If this model, known as the “360 model” becomes the standard for signing and breaking new acts, it will dramatically change the face of marketing.

Record and ticket sales could be linked to increase the profile on both fronts. Chart rules would have to change to allow a combined gig ticket and record sale to qualify for the UK top 40, and if all the major labels agreed to use the “360 model” to break new bands then this is likely to happen.

how can a plugger help?

Most record labels build a promotional campaign for a new band by investing in plugging teams who deal with national radio, TV and press promotion as the main areas to focus on, followed by regional press and radio, and student and club promotions on top of that. Major labels have their own promotions departments for radio, TV and press but they sometimes agree to employ independent promotions companies if they have already played a part in the successful breaking of a band before signing.

A radio plugger will see a new live band and approach them to offer their help. National radio and press are often more likely to play demos of unsigned bands if they know a plugger is involved, as this means there will be a long term plot. There are lots of opportunities for unsigned bands to receive press coverage which can raise their profile and increase their fan base. The only downside to this is if a band secures lots of press early and they use up most of the opportunities before their first single.

National press tends to bring bands through a process where they are initially allocated a new band feature and small live review, and then as their profile

grows they move from the new band section to a main feature. Record labels aim to build a marketing campaign to peak on the release of a debut album, so they would rather have a steady flow of press and a blitz just before the album hits the shops. If a band has lots of press early (usually to try and get signed) and then use up all of their new band features it can be hard to maintain momentum up to the release of an album.

There are exceptions where certain publications choose to champion a band and you see them in every issue, this obviously has a massive up-side when it comes to raising the profile, but it can also turn off hard core fans who feel a band is all hype rather than substance. This is a fine line which needs to be controlled by the press plugger.

It is better for a new band to have lots of national radio coverage and no press than vice-versa. Perhaps this is because radio is more immediate, if you hear a song, you know straight away whether you like it or not, whereas if you read about a band you are relying on other people's opinions and judgements, and are less likely to trust the hype.

touring

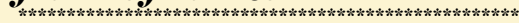
A vital area of marketing is built around touring. If a band has a successful national tour, there will be regional radio and press campaigns to build the profile around each date. If someone in Norwich hears a band on local radio and then reads a gig preview in the local paper and sees some form of advertising for the live show, they have a number of triggers combining to get the artist into their consciousness.



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find the fan base



There are no rules when it comes to breaking a new band and there are various marketing tools at the artist's disposal. The Internet is still one of the best places to market a new artist, websites such as Drowned in Sound, NME.com and Gigwise should be targeted. The general idea is to initially try and find the hard core fan base for a band and once the album is released to move beyond that fan base by marketing to a wider audience using billboards and TV advertising.

