



# ONE, TWO, ONE, TWO.

A STEP BY STEP  
GUIDE TO THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN  
MUSIC INDUSTRY



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# FOREWORD

It's probably not cool to write the foreword to your own book. But then again, people say it isn't cool to self-publish either and this here is now the second edition of this self-published book. Therefore it seems somehow only appropriate that I do this.

When I first started working on this book in 2008, I was certain that it would find an audience and be of help to many, many musicians and managers in South Africa. But it wasn't until my father suggested turning portions of the book into workshops after publication in 2010 that I could take it to people wherever they were, that I began to perceive just how needed and helpful this book could be.

The South African music industry, like many other around the world, is in tumult and is changing. Unlike many though, it seems ours is still growing as more and more of us overcome the legacy of apartheid and enter the market place. This of course brings its own, new challenges to the table.

The idea of copyright and the artist's right to earn fairly from their own works is under siege right now due to digital media and the various new platforms that have emerged to distribute music easily to the masses. The fact that the masses seem to perceive music as a free, god-given right presents a challenge to artists. A challenge to earn, protect and grow their art.

As a result, never has it been more important that each and every music professional is properly acquainted with their intellectual property rights, the legal issues that go with it and an understanding of how the business works and why. To not be armed with this means you risk not ever being able to make any money off your art.

On that front, this is a not a definitive legal text. For that I recommend Nick Matzukis' excellent text on South African music and entertainment law. What it is, is a starting point. A place where you can expand your overall knowledge base and begin to grasp the scope of the challenges that any full time musician, composer or manager must face.

I said I was certain this book had an audience and it turns out I was right. But what I also discovered was that I physically could not reach that audience on my own. Which is why, 3 years after publication, this pdf download is now available free of charge to you.

Download it, copy it, share it, pass it on to your friends, do whatever you must, but spread it to everyone you know who needs it. Please do not try and pass off this work as your own and please acknowledge the book and myself as a source whenever you use it. But please use, it, spread it and share it as far and as wide as you can.

As always, I am available for consultations, workshops and talks. Just get in touch via my website and we can make plans.

Go make music!

**David Chislett**  
*Switzerland 2014*  
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# INTRODUCTION

**SINCE** 1994, the South African music industry has undergone some unprecedented growth. At a time when many global music markets are experiencing negative growth, our freedom has resulted in more local music being made and sold than ever before. Radio stations are playing more South African music and on the whole, the industry is far healthier than it was.

But at the same time, it seems that on a grass roots level not much has changed. Information is still hard to come by, there are big risks to be taken and as a newcomer to the market, it is hard to be taken seriously and to get your music heard. Almost everyone who has ever played their own music has at one time thought about trying to make a living from that and only that. But the truth is that only a handful of people ever seem to achieve this dream.

There are many reasons for this poor conversion rate. But in South Africa, one of the primary culprits has always been a lack of information, as well as access to existing information. For many, many years, our market was seen almost as a dumping ground for international major labels, who just delivered pre-hyped and marketed international music to our shops, which we bought faithfully. As a result, not much expertise was nurtured on how to develop and grow an artist's career from scratch. Some notable people managed to learn the hard way and achieve success in the process. But being such a small market, mostly this information was hoarded and fiercely guarded.

However, thanks to digital downloads and the Internet, every

artist in every corner of the globe now plays in an international marketplace that recognises no borders and no limitations. As a result, information is freely and easily available and in many ways opportunities for artists are far greater than ever before. But of course, in the same breath, this also means that the competition is fiercer than ever before.

Consequently, the average musician or manager has to be business savvy to a level that was previously unheard of. While the major international labels are here to stay, their role has changed fundamentally in the last few years, and emerging artists literally have no need for a label to begin successful careers and to begin to sell and live off their own music.

These are the thoughts that propelled the writing of this book. After 20 years of involvement with music in South Africa, from playing in a garage band in 1987 to being Goldfish's publicist in 2007, I have seen so many artists try and fail to make a go of their music careers. Sometimes, to be brutally honest, the music has simply not been good enough. But in other cases, the appreciation of the industry and what it takes to succeed were the major stumbling blocks. There seems to be a perception among most artists that it is somehow EASY to make it big in music. The fact is that it is not. It is hard and can be very complicated.

While the SA music industry may seem unsophisticated and unstructured, there are very definite structures that are in place that need to be understood and interacted with. Many artists over the

years have simply not collected money that was due to them and waiting for them, because they did not know they were entitled to it. The idea that as artists they should not understand business seems to be deeply entrenched in the minds of many creative people. However, in a global market on a shrinking planet, you MUST understand the business. You don't have to do it,

that will explain the major structures of the industry and their roles and how best one can interface with them. It also shares my thoughts on how best to approach the business of music and how to survive being a creative artist in a world that does not always make space for such people.

As such, it contains a specific mindset and methodology. I make no

formulaic work boring and borderline offensive, I would rather stimulate a freedom of thought and expression that is informed by facts and experience, but not dictated to by them.

Someone who has never played in a band or a music project before, might find, reading this book from start to finish to be the most beneficial approach. Others will find that treating

stimulate thought and growth, even if you disagree.

I feel privileged to have played in bands in this country, managed, booked, promoted and publicised them. I have written about music for countless magazines, websites and newspapers and travelled the world with South African music. While I have my favourite genres, it is my sincere hope that as a



**"...thanks to digital downloads and the internet, every artist in every corner of the globe now plays in an international marketplace..."**

Fokopolisiekar. Photo by Liam Lynch

but you need to know what exists, how it works and how you can benefit from it.

The objective of this book is to share what I have learned in the last 20 years in the South African music industry. This book is not an encyclopaedia of infallible information. It is a guide book

pretence that this is the ONLY way that things can be done. I most certainly don't seek to lay down a prescriptive set of laws that must be followed slavishly to a specific conclusion. Because music is a creative art, I do not believe that any one formula can serve EVERY artist. Further, as I personally find generic and

it as a reference manual to be consulted on specific issues over time is the best usage. It is my hope and desire to cover both options. Because even experienced members of the music industry do not know everything there is to know about all angles of this sprawling business. And alternative points of view can

country we can develop into a global powerhouse for music and deliver on the reputation established by greats like Hugh Masekela, Kevin Shirley, Sibongile Khumalo, Eddie Kramer and countless others that have taken their know-how and talents to the international market.

No doubt some will disagree with





Andrew Wessels. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

some of the ideas and approaches I have put down here. To that I wish to say that what I have written, is based on my experiences as a manager, artist and promoter, as well as my observations of other successful artists and managers. No, this is not the gospel. And no, this book will NOT guarantee you an international music career, lots of money, or global fame. What it will do, however, is bring you up to speed on how the music business works in this country, what the opportunities are, and how you can protect yourself from the endless parade of horror stories everyone seems to have at their fingertips.

From an international perspective, many of the ideas with regards to approach and attitude will stand up

anywhere in the world. I did manage and work with bands in London, England and found many of the same issues there as I encountered here. Obviously things like collection agencies, legal interpretations and so on will differ from country to country. But in principle, the same structure underpins the music business in South Africa as it does globally. By learning the ropes here, you ARE preparing yourself for an international career.

As I repeat in the book itself, success is all in the mind. With proper planning, forethought and vision, a lot more can be achieved than by leaving things to happy chance and circumstance. If there is one recurring issue that I have encountered year in and year out in this

business, it is that many people seem to have a kind of blind faith in things working out for them when they don't really have a clear idea of what it is they want and, especially, no idea of how to get there. It is also, generally speaking, these people who become the most bitter and jaded about the state of the music business and their ability to succeed. Save yourself and your peers from that bitterness by arming yourself with information and an understanding of what you are undertaking, and make sure you establish a clear vision for your career. If I can help you achieve those two things with this book, then I am a happy author.



As the writer of a book and not someone working directly with you the reader, I can do little more than share what I know on these pages. The rest is up to you, as it always is, be you the artist, or the manager. If you do not know what success means to you, how will you ever know if you get there?

I hope that I answer most of your questions in this book. If not, there is always the next edition to visit additional issues and ideas!

Go out there and make music!

*David Chislett*



# PART 1

THE START



# CHAPTER 1

## HEADSPACE

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headspace

**WHAT** is headspace? Simply put, it is that collection of motivations and attitudes that one acts upon in life, be it within one's job, hobby, or one's relationship. For a band starting out, headspace is a critical issue. The state of mind associated with the formation of your musical outfit, whether you are starting a band or intend to build a solo career, is very important as it gives the first clues as to how to try and run your career according to your actual motivations for getting started.

For example, it often comes to light after some time that all the band really wanted to do was spend a couple of years partying, playing the country and having a good time before getting on with what they deem to be normal life. The band thing was never seen as anything more than just that. In other words, the headspace at the time was directed towards a short-term involvement that would be lot of fun, but that would ultimately come to an end. Now consider how differently you would go about your business if you involved yourself with musicians who were committed to making a career out of the music business and the art and craft of their musicianship. In the first case you would have to be sure to keep things fun, not too serious and not too difficult. In the latter, the emphasis would be on learning, growth and the establishment of reputation for long-term development. There is nothing wrong with either attitude. The world is full of bands who are really just there to

have a good time. But life starts to get complicated when there is confusion over what the various members want to achieve and when there is a combination of different attitudes within the group.

### MOTIVATION AND HONESTY

It is vital to be honest about your motivations behind establishing or joining a band. In a business where being cool, offhand and casual is often

deemed to be crucial, to admit to being in the process of developing a career and taking controlled, predetermined steps towards realising that goal might appear to be out of kilter with the attitudes of those around you. But being a music professional is identical to having any other job. You will still need to commute (albeit to rehearsals, studios and performances instead of an office), you will still have equipment to maintain and keep up to date, and you will still have rent and other bills of your own to pay. Therefore you will have to pay attention to how you intend to earn your way and, what's more, how you will seek to further yourself in the business so that you can grow your earning potential and establish music as a viable career.

Oddly enough, if you were to admit



Bingo. Photo by David Chislett

**"Before signing a deal and becoming part of the music industry, I asked members of Prophets Of da City and People Making Music Productions what the industry was really like and got the honest response from them that prepared me for the reality of the industry."**

Emile Jansen of Black Noise

that you just wanted to mess around for a couple of years, have some fun and maybe make some cash and so on, people would no doubt be offended that you can treat their chosen profession with such levity. In the music industry appearance is everything. But if you want to appear in exactly the right way, you first have to examine your motivations carefully and be honest about what it is that you want and expect to achieve. If you do not do this, planning what you need to do next becomes difficult and the road ahead will inevitably contain conflict between various agendas.

Since the creation of music often requires collaborative partners, both musical and other, motivation becomes increasingly important. It is a matter

of investment. In fact, it matters not one bit if your band members are less motivated to make a career out of music than you are. As long as you know this to start with and do not, therefore, put all your eggs in one basket. Even a band full of part-timers whose desire is to play for a couple of years before getting on with "real" life can still achieve a significant amount if the music is good enough and this can provide an excellent stepping stone to the person who wants to stay in the business long-term. This is not so much about only playing with people who share your motivations as it is about optimising the experience you can gain by achieving a better understanding of your own direction and ambitions.





Joe Penn. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

## DIRECTION AND AMBITION

Direction and ambition are very importantly linked when it comes to the music business. Direction is incredibly important as it has a direct bearing on how ambitious you can realistically be. For example, a band playing death metal while singing in Zulu cannot expect to capture a large sector of the market in South Africa, and certainly not the world, whereas a band playing straight up pop music or West Coast hip

hop does, in theory, stand some chance of penetrating the global market. The truth is that it just doesn't matter how good you are as a musician. If you are playing music that appeals to a tiny, specialised niche market, you are always going to battle to get any kind of broad recognition and struggle to make any money. That said, just because you play commercially-oriented music, doesn't mean that you are going to be rich and famous. Just as your motivation for playing is important in determining your path through the industry, your ambitions for your music are too.

Once you can acknowledge that you are ambitious, the path is cleared for hard work. If one has lofty goals in any endeavour, hard work is going to be required. Don't be scared to set agendas and targets and make the entire cast of the music project ambitious. The power of music of any genre lies in the songwriting behind the sound and style of the band. To be successful, the first thing to learn is how to write great songs. So study them. Listen closely to successful hits and figure out the structures that people use; then you can copy them (sensitively), or pervert them, or invent a sound that contrasts with them. But listen and learn. Set a challenge and then figure out how to meet it. Ambition is a heavy fuel that can take one a long way, as long as one is prepared to put in the grind. But let's get one thing clear here: direction needs to be sorted out too.

## SKILL VS PASSION

When it comes down to deciding what is important in your own armoury and in those of the people you want to work with, sensible business advice advocates passion over skill. Skills can always be acquired through hard work and practice, whereas passion is hard to acquire over time and the lack of it is instantly detectable. In addition, a lack of technical skill can result in creative flow in unexpected ways.

The best example of this is an entire genre of music: the blues. Many of the greatest blues artists of the early 20th century and even earlier were not great guitar players or vocalists. What draws us to their music is its content, the

emotion and power of the lyrics and the direct power of the musical delivery. This cannot be learned or acquired – it's something that comes from the heart and the gut and that speaks directly to listeners. A good local example of this is Martin Schofield of Wonderboom and Martin Rocka and The Sickshop. Widely regarded as one of the best technical and emotional guitarists in the country, Martin was not born with what musos refer to as an "ear" for music. He was never one of those people who could hear a song on the radio and play it on his instrument the next day. But through years of diligent application and plenty of passion and commitment, Martin is now what he is. His passion for music has more than overcome the skills gap he initially experienced, and he was always certain that this was going to happen. When we compete in as tangled a marketplace as the music market of the 21st century, an ability to cut through clutter with your music is a valuable asset. People today react to pure emotive power far more quickly than they do to a beautifully crafted, technically complete piece of music.

This is not an attempt to downplay technical skills. Rather, it is to emphasise that it is not a prerequisite for becoming a successful musical entity to be a genius on your instrument, or even with your voice. If you do happen to be a technical genius, find that within yourself that really burns hard and strong and use your ability to bring it to vibrant life. A technical virtuoso with the flame of passion burning through everything he does is a musical collaborator that everyone will want to work with. Music is still an art form, despite the industry's attempts to turn it into some kind of consumable product. So play with your heart and soul and don't hold back.

# CHAPTER 2

## INFLUENCES

17 influences

**THE** 21st century is a soup of information in which we all swim. It is therefore unavoidable that we are influenced by our surroundings in one way or another. Songwriters are influenced by their heroes, by their favourite bands, by what is "hot" right now, by musical history, and by political and social intent. The question is; how does one make oneself heard in this soup? How to make music that stands out when so much of what we hear has been done before?

### WHY DO YOU PLAY WHAT YOU PLAY?

This question is a crucial one in terms of getting your direction and the business of your music kick-started. A lack of understanding of why you are doing what you are doing often leads to a crisis of motivation when the going gets tough. If you have no real idea of why you are embarked on a particular path, what will you do if things start to go wrong? Say you formed a reggae band and suddenly the world just totally goes off the stuff. What do you do? Stick to your guns? Modify your approach? Give up and go and work in a bank?

An understanding of why you are playing what you are, will assist you in dealing with these obstacles. To

continue with the example, if you play reggae because you believe in Rastafari and see it as the one true path to personal salvation, nothing will make you deviate from playing that style of music. However, if you are a career commercial musician, you would obviously stop playing reggae and switch to something more commercially viable. And if you were only ever in it for a laugh and some kicks, then maybe the job in the bank was inevitable and this is now the time for it.

Further than this, understanding why you are playing the genre you are in will help you set up realistic goals for yourself and your band. It will give a clearer understanding of the challenges and what is possible. Taking the dynamics of the South African scene into account, how you would plan your career path as a kwaito singer will be fundamentally different to how you would plan your trajectory as a rock band. This has got nothing to do with anything other than recognising what you are playing, deciding what it is you want to achieve and planning accordingly. Essentially there is nothing wrong with not examining your motivations early on. It's not going to stop you getting going. But it may well prevent you from continuing. And, unless you are a solo artist, the clash of expectations between band members is a massive factor that very often leads to the demise of otherwise promising projects. If your singer is in it for the girls, the drugs and the laughs until he

turns 25, at which stage he will go and work for Dad, that is fine as long as the rest of you know it and your motivations coincide. However, if your guitarist has no day job, lives to play and intends to make a living from his craft one way or another, it becomes clear that you have a massive conflict potential that should be addressed before you get going and it all ends in tears.

### BALANCING INFLUENCE WITH PLAGIARISM

It is all very well to acknowledge that the world is a vast sea of information that inspires and informs us. However, the law of copyright takes a dim view of people copying creative work and passing it off as their own. The music industry is always busy with some scandal with regards to unauthorised use of melodies, lyrics and the like. Many musicians wear their influences on their sleeves with pride. It can be a mark of one's musical heritage and point of view on the world. This is one of the key factors in recognising the difference between influence and outright theft. Musicians who deny the links between their influences and what they write run the danger of passing off ideas, albeit unconsciously, as their own.

The English band Oasis has always stated their clear admiration of the Beatles, and stylistically this can be heard in their music. But no one would ever mistake an Oasis song for a Beatles track. The moment music stops sounding sort of like another act and can be mistaken directly for an existing track by that other act, the composer

MXO. Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**"It's really difficult to isolate one particular thing that makes me want to sign a new act. It is largely indefinable: In some cases it's just the voices; in other cases it is the attitude, or maybe the performance art. Then at other times it's the songs; that other-worldly, very different aspect."**

Benjy Mudie (Fresh Records)



is most probably stepping over the line between influence and plagiarism.

Legally speaking, as long as the listener can clearly discern that one piece of music came from another, it is considered plagiarism. That is to say, if parts of the melody, a hook, lyrics or music are so close to an existing work that any listener can tell that they are the same, the relevant piece can be considered to have been plagiarised. It is true that it is very hard to sound original in an environment in which experimentation has been the norm for over 60 years. Many new genres and styles have been invented and synthesised. Some even think that there truly is no new pop music to be made. Regardless of that, the direct duplication of melody, chord structure and rhythm is considered intellectual theft and culprits can be sued. Especially those who start to become successful on the basis of this theft.

## BEING CURRENT VS BEING YOU

The challenge facing any musician in the music business of today is selling the music he or she writes to the record companies and the public. Fashion is fickle and changes fast, and the bigger

music companies have made entire careers out of selling what is popular at one specific moment in time.

This state of affairs has resulted in musicians spotting trends and tailoring their own music to fit these in order to become commercially successful. This is an issue that harks directly back to why it is that the music is being made in the first place. If the objective of a band

or musician is simply to make a living out of the music, this kind of reaction is not only understandable, it is to be encouraged. The trouble is that it is not infallible.

By the time a new trend has broken on the airwaves of radio stations around the world, it has gone through a long period of gestation. It has grown from something new that was happening on the streets of a town somewhere in the world and then spread to more and more bands. In order for it to reach the attention of a record label, it typically must have been going for about two years. For another band in another part of the world to then jump on this bandwagon means that this other band is missing out on whatever it is that is brewing where they are at the time. The current wave will fade and stop and then the copycat band is left playing a style of music that is no longer popular. It happens all the time. In the 90s a swathe of copycat grunge bands featured on the Johannesburg live scene. The only ones that survived were the acts, like Sugardrive, that went on to forge their own unique sound. The same can be said of the American hip hop copycats here in South Africa. Now that the demand is for local accent, content and attitude, the American wannabes have evaporated.

It makes more business sense to be committed to the direction that is emerging from the work that a group is doing, than for that group to be trying to copy what is currently hip. The timeline involved almost always means that the copying band will lose out. Trends will always be felt as an influence in any event. To enslave the direction of new music to what is already mainstream is to condemn that music to history before it has had its moment in the sun.



Swivelfoot. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

**"What is crystal clear however is that each artist that I sign awakens something within me: something almost intangible that makes me want to work with them without considering whether they would sell or not. It's the Y factor...I look for something different from the run-of-the-mill music and artists that are challenging both themselves and the audience to hear/see/experience music in a new way."**

Benjy Mudie, Fresh Records

# CHAPTER 3

## WRITING

23 writing

**ONE** of the most crucial issues for new musicians to address is that of writing songs. This means the creation of the music that will be played, including the lyrics, the melody and the overall musical structure of the songs. Songwriting is one of the most sensitive and political areas of music. Often it is the core issue around which bands split up – certainly it has been responsible for many fights.

There are many important issues tied up in songwriting that are rarely agreed upon early in songwriting partnerships. From a publishing perspective, the person who writes all the songs legally earns more than other band members. If these issues are not addressed and fully understood up front, then songwriting and the earnings that exist around the process can offer many pitfalls and fights for the unwary. A detailed chapter on publishing follows later in the book. What we will look at now is the process.

### WHO DOES WHAT?

Copyright law recognises the person who writes the vocal melody (or the instrumental melody if there are no vocals) as the songwriter. In practice, however, the permutations of songwriting are pretty much dictated by the instrumentation involved and whether one or several band members

write the songs. If one member comes to practice with complete new songs all the time, that person will have to be considered the band's songwriter. This means that this person brings songs that are complete from start to finish: if they have lyrics and a melody line, and they also instruct each instrumentalist in what to play, then that one person is solely responsible for writing that entire song.

There are plenty of examples of bands where this happens. Most often this is when the band is a vehicle for the creative expression of one individual who has basically hired musicians to play with him or her in order to support a specific creative vision. One of the things any band needs to sort out upfront is whether the band they are in is like this or whether it is more of a creative collective. If it is more of a creative collective, then the songwriting process will be far more organic and involve more members of the band.

For example, if the singer comes into the practice room humming a melody around which the rest of the band creates a song, the singer can be said to have originated the song, as melody is central to any song. However, seeing as it is also only part of a song, all the further work that is done on any such song by other band members means that they then become co-writers and originators of any such song.

Once a melody is established, a song still needs to have its parts written and to be fleshed out into instrumentation



Andre Kriel. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

**"But artists need to understand that these things are based on trust and relationship, and that they need to work out a deal and a structure that works for them. The bottom line is that anyone who has written music deserves to be credited and rewarded for their creative labour. How you choose to split up this revenue is up to you."**

Jay Savage, Sony Music Publishing





Blk Jks. Photo by Warren Van Rensburg

and arrangement. In a band with many instrumentalists, most often the players themselves will come up with what they should be doing and write their own parts. The drummer will find a beat, the guitarist a lead section, your bass player will write a bass line, your sax player his own part. All of this activity means, once again, that these players become co-writers of the music, as they are contributing their instrumental parts to the actual song itself.

that the copyright law only recognises the writer of the lyrics as the author and the writer of the main vocal melody as the songwriter. If you wish anyone else in your musical collaboration, you are going to have to decide how to divide these two areas of royalty income in song-writing so that more people can earn from it. By understanding this, musicians can set up their songwriting understanding and accreditation in a manner that recognises the input of everyone and prevents later arguments over rights, money and credit.

This is not a process that many creative people enjoy. What needs to occur is as follows. Once a song is complete, the input of each writer is determined as a percentage of the whole. If a certain part is most important, it gets a greater weight than the other parts.

As can be seen from the above, there are degrees of participation in the songwriting process. Remember

WHO OWNS  
WHAT?

For example, if your singer brought in the lyrics and the melody, 50% of the credit for the song goes to him. The remaining 50% is then assigned to the drummer, bass player, guitarist, DJ, keyboardist or what have you, provided they each wrote their own parts. In this way, everyone is recognised for their role, and is also rewarded financially through publishing royalties according to their percentage of ownership. Many musicians find this a very undesirable way to handle affairs and basically assign an equal proportion of ownership for songwriting amongst all members if they work collaboratively. So if the group has five members, each owns 20% of the songwriting publishing rights and so on. Deciding on stakes is very important as it makes it possible for the band to earn money off its songwriting as well as its performance and CD sales. In other words, the band earns from making money at the door, but also from other people playing their music. If anyone else records a version of their song, then everyone gets his or her share. If the radio plays the song repeatedly, there is a share of royalty that goes to each member under the performance rights as administered by the Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO). Artists register their work with this organisation, which then collects money from radio and TV stations on your behalf, before distributing it to you every year. (See chapter 22 for more on SAMRO.)

have seen above and will see in greater detail later. But there is also a very practical, political reason as well. Musical groups are collaborations that involve individuals. As with any such grouping there are more and less influential people in each group. By asserting the rights of all individuals you rule out the possibility of the dominant personality benefiting unfairly from everyone else's labour. You also make it clear who is in charge. If one person is indeed creating all the music that the others are merely playing, recognising this with your songwriting credit means that this person has more say in what the band does than anyone else, even if that person is outnumbered, and the members need to understand this. But in a band where collaboration is the norm, a dominant personality cannot be allowed to railroad the others.

None of this fits in with popular myths about the music industry. In truth it is a sheer hard-nosed business, with no romance or glamour. The reason that acknowledging this is so important is that, without the proper structure behind your music, fighting and failure are always just around the corner. In order to avoid bitter recriminations and fights over money and prestige later, musicians are well advised to look hard at the business side of this industry very early on. Nearly all of the horror stories that abound in this industry sprang from the ignorance of those involved who gave away what they shouldn't have and then couldn't legally get it back. In short, they were ignorant, did nothing to resolve that ignorance and in effect orchestrated their own demise. This book aims to address that ignorance.

BALANCE OF  
POWER

There are solid and practical business reasons for recognising the rights of ownership of songs, as we

# CHAPTER 4

## THE BAND

**UNLIKE** a decision to get a job or to play a particular instrument, the decision to start a band is often not a premeditated one. There are times when one individual with a specific vision decides to recruit personnel for a band, but this is not often the case with beginner bands.

In interviewing many beginner bands, the question: "How did it all start?" is most often met with, "Well we were all out drinking one night..." The most common impetus to starting a band is being out and about jolling with mates. While this does at least guarantee that at least one of your bandmates is an old friend, it is hardly a recruitment methodology that you'll find in this year's recommended HR practices handbook. This is why it is so important for bands to be accommodating of the individual vision of each member. While the impetus to start a band is an important creative spark, once that has been achieved it is a good idea to think hard about the objectives of the outfit before completing the line-up.

Of course, membership of a band depends almost entirely on what style of music it will play. The nature of creative people being what it is, a handy rule of thumb is to keep to the minimum required to achieve the desired sound. Very few rock bands have three guitarists; two or even one might do the job just fine. Bear this in mind when thinking about additional members.

Finding members can be a frustrating and time-consuming process. If you are

the prime mover behind the idea of the band and the person who is writing and creating the songs, then don't let the recruitment process hold the creative process back – keep writing while you are looking. No creative effort is ever wasted and to stop writing just because you don't have a band to play your stuff is self-defeating.

The biggest challenge in finding band members is finding like-minded individuals who are of a similar age and skill set. While one might often find one band member who is a superior musician to the others, more talented players can get frustrated and leave beginner bands pretty fast. It is often better to find a team that can grow together technically. Go for a mix of vision, attitude and look rather than musical expertise. Someone can always improve as an instrumentalist. It is not so easy to effect a change in point of view, personal style or vision.

It is most advisable to seek a team via word of mouth. Then one can recruit people in the same general area, physically and mentally. Friends will likely recommend other friends of a similar age and interest bracket. Once again, curve balls and unlikely combinations of personality can operate as the creative spark that creates truly original music, so don't be put off by unexpected people.

### MULTI-BAND MEMBERS

Every band has its songwriting core. In very few cases does an entire band contribute to the writing of the material that is ultimately played. Once the songwriting team is established, the task is to recruit the right people in order to bring the sound to life.

The South African industry is small and many musicians play in a number of bands. In effect they act as session musicians in a number of projects in order to make a living. While this dedication to music is in itself admirable and ensures that the individuals concerned are doing the thing they love full-time, when you are putting a band together such a member should give you pause for thought. When your band is starting out, the expertise and adaptability of such a member may seem like a good thing. They are generally good musicians who can learn new material fast and who like to be able to contribute. You may also find their experience of the world out there alluring: they know all about gigs, studios and the like. However, these sorts of players do come with some fairly serious drawbacks for a new band.

Someone who plays in many outfits, or even just two, is going to experience a conflict of interest sooner or later. Seeing as there are only ever two nights in each weekend, gig commitments are an immediate concern. And if one of the outfits this person plays in is bigger than yours, your own progress can be seriously impeded while this person fulfills other commitments, like tours or recording sessions. Reliability is therefore going to be an issue. But if this is without doubt the best person

Taxi Violence. Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**"Send your demo to all the community radio stations first. I can recommend Tuks FM 107.2, UJFM, MFM, RMR, PUK FM and UCT Radio. Your chances of receiving radio play and getting interviews are much better than with any regional or national station."**

Barney Simon, Radio DJ



for the mix of your band, at least make sure that you know his or her schedule well in advance so that you can plan that of your band to maximise available opportunities.

The other problem with musicians who play in a number of bands, without being strictly speaking session players, is commitment. It is most often these kinds of players that leave bands, and their lack of attachment to projects can cause havoc with a growing band's reputation. All too often one sees a band rising through the ranks and, just as they start to see some growth and success and recognition, they lose a key band member. Someone who is playing in many outfits finds it far too easy to leave one, as the others are always there as a backup. Try and get around this by getting the individual to buy into your vision and commit to it. If you have to, establish a penalty clause, like having to forgo band fees, so that it is not in his or her best interest to leave.

The last option is to treat a member like this as a session musician. In other words, they are hired guns who learn the parts they have to play and who play no part in songwriting, band strategy or vision. They get paid for what they do and, if they leave, it is a simple matter to replace them with other players. This does come with its own obstacles, but will at least keep your band going until you can find a player dedicated and suitable enough to fill the role full-time without playing for every other band on the block.

## ACCOMMODATING DIFFERENCES

Just as in being part of a family or holding down a job, one of the biggest challenges in a band is accommodating the differences between your members. The significant detail here though is that in a band your differences may well be the source of the unique spark that propels you past your peers.

The sorts of differences that need to be accommodated in a band include personality, musical background, stylistic intent, technical expertise, image and performance values. While it is undoubtedly true that shared vision is an important factor in the success of every band, that doesn't mean that you have to be clones of one another. Once again, unless you are hiring a group of session musicians to enact your exact musical vision, it is not wise to reject the input of your band members. Not only will this lead to resentment and the eventual loss of members, but it may also prevent you from developing the ideas behind the music to their full potential by ignoring something you may not have thought of. It is not often that you will find a band where all members contribute to the day-to-day business of songwriting, image creation and musical direction, but there is usually more than one voice involved. The danger of keeping only one musical vision alive in the band from a creative point of view is that the band and its music can quickly become one-dimensional and other members can lose their drive and become mere passengers along for the ride.

If one can take the attitude that the sound, look and vision of the band is made up of the sum of all its parts,

**"The old-school style of sticking up posters and handing out flyers still works. Drop your flyers off at venues, events, festivals, parties and CD stores."**

Barney Simon, Radio DJ

Thandiswa Mazwai. Photo by Kevin S Flee



then your band members have more of a vested interest in the band, will be more passionate and committed, and your whole offering will stand a greater chance of being unique and powerful. For example, if band members were intolerant of musical influences all the time, we would never have had great bands like *Rage Against The Machine*, fusing hip hop and metal into a new amalgam. Rock as we know it would never have grown out of the work of Elvis Presley. Urban music would never have fused R&B and hip hop and Kylie Minogue would still be an actress. As with much else when one is playing in

a band, it all comes down to attitude. If yours is exclusive, draws hard lines and insists on a dogmatic approach to what the band can and can't do, you will find that your music will become formulaic, you will lose band members regularly and momentum will be hard to maintain. As an artist you need to be listening to everything that is going on in music around you. A rigid approach to what you like, listen to and write will likely result in a formulaic creation. By listening to everything that is out there, you open yourself up to more influences and ideas and can better stay ahead of the pack.





# PART 2

TAKING IT FURTHER



# CHAPTER 5

## GEAR

33 gear

**IT** goes without saying that one of the most important things an emerging musical act needs to take care of right upfront is the gear it will use to create and perform its music. Depending on genre this will range from guitars and drums right through classical instruments to synthesizers, computers and other electronic devices. Most insurance companies will not insure musical equipment for a working band, unless it stays in one secure place at all times or unless one is prepared to pay such a huge premium that it is effectively unaffordable. So take care of this kit. It represents the only way in which the project can make money and further its aims. Without it all one really has is a bunch of ideas and ambitions.

market in second-hand instruments. So the question often asked is: how good an idea is it to buy gear second-hand? There is no short answer to this, as there are various factors to be considered depending on what it is that you are looking to buy. With our exchange rate, import taxes and the like, buying new can be prohibitively expensive. The problem with second-hand is, of course, one of condition. How equipment has been treated can make all the difference and being able to spot the obvious defects becomes an important purchasing skill. Make sure that equipment is in good condition by either researching carefully yourself or taking a better informed person with you when buying.

### NEW OR 2ND HAND?

Despite what some people believe, it's not how fancy or expensive equipment is, but what goes into the music that makes the real difference.

It is true that certain brands deliver better performance than others, have more features and are more versatile. But in the beginning what is needed is equipment that is affordable and reliable.

Cost is always an important factor to be considered and there is a big

### PA OR NOT TO PA?

A public address system or PA is something that is only really required once regular live shows become a reality. While there are plenty of places

for musicians to perform around South Africa, not many of them are dedicated live music venues and therefore do not have in-house sound systems for artists to play through. However, this does not mean that one absolutely needs to have a system. There are plenty of small businesses whose focus it is to hire out small PAs to bands, as well as looking

Swivelfoot. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden



**"There are good arguments both for owning your own PA and not. Mostly it comes down to your belief: how much do you believe you are going to be successful?"**

Gavin Harrison, sound engineer: Sugardrive, Arno Carstens, John Vlismas



Clive Bean. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

after the sound engineering for the night.

The factors to consider when looking at whether to buy a PA or not include:

- cost
- transport
- maintenance
- engineering

Firstly the cost. A decent PA is not cheap. To make a system totally and independently sustainable, a good set of speakers (front of house), good onstage monitor speakers, a comprehensive set of microphones and stands, a mixing desk, amplification, a long "snake" cable and possibly some signal processors to improve sound quality are all required. Twenty thousand rand just isn't going to cover it. Unless the

band is in a position to be gigging four to five times a week and saving one to two thousand rand a night in sound hire by owning a system, it is an expensive undertaking that may not even pay for itself in the short-mid-term.

The second issue is transportation. Although PA systems these days are extremely powerful for their comparatively small size, they are still not the sort of things that can easily be transported in a car. A dedicated vehicle like a bakkie or possibly a trailer is needed, especially when other band equipment needs to be transported at the same time. This transport means an additional expense as well as increasing the actual workload for the band.

As is routine with things electrical, a PA will need maintaining. Speakers blow, circuits short, cables snap and

bits and pieces go missing. In order to keep a PA in peak running order a fair amount of electrical knowledge and mechanical aptitude is necessary. Or deep pockets to pay someone else.

The last issue to consider is that of sound engineering. The biggest luxury of hiring a PA or using an in-house system is that these nearly always come with an engineer. At the very least you have the option of hiring the system with or without an engineer. If you choose to buy, one of the band members is going to have to be the engineer, or you are going to need to hire a full-time engineer to look after your sound for you. While it is true that the band can easily soundcheck effectively and set up its sound before going on stage to perform, the acoustic dynamics of a lot of venues change significantly from when they are empty to when they are full. If one member of the band is the engineer this means that there is no one to tweak the sound to compensate for any of these changes as the performance gets under way. The obvious answer is a dedicated engineer, but bear in mind that he will need to be paid as well, and your bottom line can start to look a little bit thin.

So the short answer to the question is that there is no right or wrong way. As with most issues in this business, it really does come down to what it is you are doing and how far you intend to take it. If you are a commercial band that can and will play four times a weekend and is earning really good money, it makes sense to have your own system and engineer: your sound will always be good and consistent, you have an excellent capital investment and you also have a specialist piece of hardware that you can even rent out on off nights to make more money for your band. But if you are strictly a weekends only, "lets

have a laugh" band, it's not an issue that you will ever need to engage with.



When it comes to equipment, it is always good to be clear from the beginning on what equipment belongs to whom. If a group decides to buy a PA out of band

money, obviously every member has an equal share. But it is a very good idea to make sure this is clear to everyone from the word go and that only band money is invested in the purchase. All instrumentalists will own their own gear: a DJ the turntables, the guitarist his guitar, amp and effects and so on. Difficulties can arise when the outfit wins gear as prizes or decides to fund the upgrade of any equipment out of band money.

The line is generally very clear as to who owns what. The trick is to make sure that this is well understood by all from the beginning and that consensus is obtained as to how communally-owned gear will be distributed should the line-up change or the outfit break up. For example, if the outfit has won guitar amps and a drum kit in a competition and the bass player wants to leave, everyone needs to know if the bass player has a right to take an amplifier with him or needs to buy it from the band. This is a classic example of the kind of agreements all musical projects need to have in place as soon as the possibility of a situation arises, in order to avoid ugliness later.



# CHAPTER 6

## PRACTICE/REHEARSAL

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practice/rehearsal

**PRACTICE** is a vital aspect of becoming a technically accomplished and reliable, or “tight”, player. What is often not emphasised enough is that in order to become a good musical unit, plenty of practice together is also required. This is only logical as any kind of group one is bringing together is a collection of individuals, often with very different styles, approaches, disciplines and levels of expertise.

Regular rehearsal is important for more reasons than just fine-tuning the ability to play together. Practice sessions are also a unique arena in which members can get to know each other and feel out each other’s strengths and weaknesses. The practice room is a safe creative space where members can try out new things, bring ideas to the fore and generally go about the business of trying to improve the musical unit. It is also the place where, as a unit, you can compose new music and work on material that members have brought. If you hope to be an original band, this is the space where arrangements, melody and harmony form, as the musician contributes their creative touches to a song, or collaborates to take an idea from its conception to completion as a full song.



Any musical enterprise has its collection of songs, which need to be slick, well put together and played according to the correct structure.

Rehearsal is the place where these arrangements are put in place and this structure is finalised. Whether you are a unit that has one primary songwriter bringing finished work to the practice room or write as a collective, it is always a good idea to leave the final structure and arrangement to be resolved by the band playing the songs in the rehearsal room. What this means is that the introduction, order of verses, where the bridge takes place, any solo breaks and so on need to be put together and rehearsed thoroughly before performance. All instrumentalists bring a unique feel and approach to their parts, and these unique signatures can and will lift a song if each band member is allowed to contribute. It is this personal X factor that can take a fairly ordinary song and turn it into something special.

Allow the space to really play to your strengths. Have the courage to play with structure and parts in order to bring out the best in a song. There are no golden rules with song structure. You don’t have to have a chorus that keeps being repeated; you don’t have to have a middle eight or bridge that creates a deviation from the body of

Loyiso Bala Band. Photo by Kevin S. Flee



the song. You can have all or none of these and still create perfectly good music. A clever band is one that allows all the role players to give their best in the process of writing songs so that the result is unique, technically well made and pleasing to the ear.

For example, if the singer has written a new song and brought it to rehearsal, let her play it through a few times as is and listen carefully. No matter what part of a song she has brought, or what structure she has followed, there will always be room for positive change and adaptation to make the piece fuller and better without losing its essence.

To keep life interesting and to help with finding the unique voice of your project, start to play with structure. Would a song work better with a purely vocal intro? Is the chorus strong enough to actually begin the song? Could your bass player's unexpected falsetto voice really make an arresting and catchy intro section? The song itself doesn't change, but by thinking freely about how to package it the group will develop a unique style and voice. A process like this can help a group to differentiate itself, avoid predictable songwriting and, most importantly, have a lot of fun with its music. The end result is that everyone feels like they have contributed and had some stake in the process and therefore everyone tries harder.

The rehearsal space is also a critical area for practising your set. Your set is the songs you will play live during a performance. There is nothing more irritating than watching a band play live that doesn't know what song comes next. Sometimes in the heat of the moment the crowd can and will dictate to you what song they want to hear next. But that only generally happens to very well established artists who have had radio and TV hits and whose songs

the audience knows. When starting out, you still need to impress. A band that has the ability to play its half-hour or 45-minute set without hesitation or ungainly pauses is impressive. This can only be achieved by deciding on the set order for shows in the practice room. Keep it fresh though: change it around before gigs; try things in different orders. Rehearse the live set in roughly the order that it will be played at the next show.

Part of this is planning breaks and speeches. The singer needs to think about what to say in-between songs in

**"There are a good few things bands can look after to help themselves get ahead: Be unique and original. In our business there is little room for someone who copies someone else."**

Carel Hoffman  
Founder/owner Oppikoppi Productions

the practice room. It is totally normal for an inexperienced front person to freeze up in front of a crowd and mumble stupid comments. But if time has been spent in the practice room thinking this aspect through, then at least he has some ideas to fall back on, even if he is nervous and still doesn't do it very well. This is particularly important if the band has different tunings in songs. The group needs to practise how and



Backstage. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

where these changes will take place live and also how to keep the audience's attention while they are taking place. If the singer is not good at it, it's fine if the bass player, drummer, keyboard player, trombonist or B-boy does it – as long as someone does! Practice so that what is said contributes to the show and is meaningful. These pauses are also an opportunity to impress and recruit fans. Don't waste them by not knowing what to say.

For example, breaks between songs are great times to announce your web address; to remind people to add their names to the list at the door to hear about more shows; to push the merchandise you are selling; to announce a new show next week; to announce that your single is on radio, your video on TV. You can thank people, throw out free merchandise, give the

band's name, introduce the band, thank the venue and the sound guy. The list is virtually endless, but if you're not thinking about it beforehand, chances are you're not just going to come up with it on stage.



Live performance has never been as important to musical artists as it is today. The changes in the global industry, the peculiar history of South African

music and the power of word-of-mouth marketing all mean that the live performance that a band puts on has become the dominant force in its arsenal. The ability to persuade and





capture an audience with a live show has never been greater. In 2007 Prince gave away 350 000 albums for free with a newspaper in the UK. As a result he sold out one month's worth of consecutive live shows in London. In his case, the album became merely a marketing tool for the live shows. Obviously for a new artist, this extreme is an unlikely scenario, but it does demonstrate how emphasis has switched to the live arena in the modern marketplace.

**"Attract attention:  
if no one knows  
about you, no one  
else will want to  
know about you."**

Carel Hoffman  
Founder/owner, Oppikoppi Productions

Actual performance is something that most new outfits neglect terribly. It takes a while for the confidence to build enough to dare to put on a show. But a well-rehearsed live performance is always going to give a performer more confidence and something to fall back on (or indeed hide behind), as opposed to stepping on stage and having to make it up as he goes along. This is another one of those music myths where people in the business have long suggested that what happens on stage is and must be a massively

spontaneous outpouring of creativity. Few artists are actually capable of this. Think of it as a role in a film or a play: the part needs to be learned, as do the moves and the expressions. In short, the performer needs to know the character she is going to play and then get into it. Think of the spectaculars that Madonna stages. People go to see these shows whether they like her music or not. And it is obvious that every move, every costume change, is planned. Sure there are spontaneous moments, but that is all they are: moments in a grand plan.

So, if the band must dance while playing, practice it. If there are things to be said between songs, practise that too. If the DJ can scratch with his nose as a novelty, make sure he practises it in the jam room over and over till he can do it flawlessly. Too often, band practise rooms are spaces where the group of musicians effectively stand in a circle and watch each other while they run through the material. This is fine for learning the songs, but to practise performance, more is needed. Set up the team as they would play on a stage in a live environment. All face one way. Do not take time between songs, and play as if there is a crowd watching. It is a completely different way of rehearsing.

Make sure that you understand what you look like live. A common suggestion is to practise in front of a mirror, if a large enough one can be found. Speak to ballet halls in your area and ask if they will let you have a quick practice there. A more practical, if expensive, way is to set up a video camera in front of the band that can capture the entire crew and tape rehearsals. Then watch it carefully after practice and discuss what each of you is doing, what works and what doesn't. Many musicians, upon finally seeing video footage of



Dave Baudains (New Academics). Photo by Kevin S. Flee

themselves live, have professed to acute embarrassment at their onstage antics, purely because they had never seen them from the audience's perspective before! If these methods are out of reach, ask an objective third party whose opinion you value to stand in front and watch carefully, making notes that you can discuss afterwards. This is an interesting one.



You actually need to practise for success. This is about training the mind to realise the greatest potential from your musical endeavour possible. A negative expectation or a half-hearted attitude is never going to gain you much of anything from life. Instead, if you take the attitude that you are going to succeed, and plan for this, you are

forced to think through what would happen next and plan accordingly.

Plan and practise for success by visualising what needs to happen for the group to get from where it is today to a point that would be considered success. The most important part of this process is defining what is meant by success. Success means different things to different people. If you would be happy with a single on national radio, a countrywide tour or an international support slot, that's fine, as long as you understand what it is that you are after. But if you are after an international record deal, the ability to tour the world and expect to make a living from your music for the rest of your life, then you are going to have to do more planning than the next muso.

It doesn't matter whether your peers consider your idea of success likely, or even possible. What does matter is that the focus remains on exactly what it is you want from the music business and that you plan accordingly, effectively rehearsing your role in your own success. For example, if a group does want to go international and get its music out there, it needs to make sure that its members have passports. It is the small things in life that make things happen. What if you get offered a tour slot, but can't leave the country because you have the incorrect documentation? Wouldn't that just be ridiculous? It is this kind of mindset that does need to be practised.

Make sure that everyone knows what it is that must come next – what each step is that takes you up your ladder defining success. Meet other bands, exchange information, find out how to record and how to submit songs to radio. Develop a timeline and work constructively towards these goals. Much of what happens in the

music industry does indeed happen by chance: fashions come and go and trends change. But if you don't have a plan, you are totally at the mercy of these winds of change. With a plan the changes can guide a group through the miasma of the business to its goal. The truth is that an astonishingly high percentage of musicians will never "make it" in the music business, and will go back to day jobs never having released that album or had a song on radio. The statistics on achieving

**"Attract a crowd:  
bands are often booked  
solely on what size  
crowd they can pull.  
So if you can attract an  
audience, people are  
interested."**

Carel Hoffman  
Founder/owner, Oppikoppi Productions

long-term musical success can be quite scary. Allegedly, even in the USA, 80% of artists with a record deal in place still hold down day jobs in order to make ends meet. In South Africa, in a city like Johannesburg, anywhere from 25 to 50 artists perform every Friday and Saturday night. That's a lot of clutter to cut through in order to make yourself heard. Don't let this put you off, but you would be well advised to discover what you are up against.



# CHAPTER 7

## AGREEMENTS

**I**f there is one thing that bands seem to hate doing, it is setting up agreements between each other in order to define and regulate relationships. Most musicians seem to take the attitude that it's all OK, that they are all creative souls working together towards the same thing. But very rarely do groups of individuals share a common goal or vision, or ideas about how to achieve those goals and visions. The result with musical groups is most often failure. Many musical projects bite the dust because of arguments between band members or collaborators about *how* they are going to do things, and conflicts around the music and direction that escalate into personal confrontations. This is because no ground rules or understandings have been set up in the first place.

This simple adage holds true with many things in communally creative life. As a band it is important to iron out how equipment will be handled or bought, how money earned will be shared, what each member's role is, and what the specific responsibilities of each member will be. There are also issues of songwriting credits, publishing and the like. If these are not addressed, they are potential conflict zones that are left to lurk like mantraps.

### INTRA-BAND MEMBER CONTRACT

The idea here is to create an environment where all members of the project are aware of their roles and responsibilities, and how important it is that they fulfil these roles. The idea is not to create a mini-totalitarian state where everyone is ruled through fear of stepping out of line. Instead, these agreements should be set up in such a way that all members know they are playing to their strengths, that all of their contributions are noted and valued, and that the balance of power is distributed fairly amongst them.

The obvious part of intra-band agreements is the musical; by which I mean who plays what instrument. But experience shows that it is often wise to go a bit further even here. It is healthy to try and establish a culture of growth amongst the people you work with. Firstly because it staves off boredom and stagnation, and secondly because it prevents the group from becoming creatively and musically stuck in a rut. So when you are all agreeing that so and so is the bass player and so and so the DJ, also include the idea that each member is committed to and responsible for growth and skills development in this area. Make sure that your singer is committed to going for some singing lessons or that your bassist is prepared to learn some new

style that your drummer will learn to play to a click track, your DJ will explore new genres and styles and so on. If not everyone is committed to becoming a better musician and technician, what most often happens is that those who practise more and stretch themselves soon exceed the abilities of the others in the band. Then you are left with a situation in which someone can no longer keep up with the band as a whole, effectively holding back its growth and creating tension, or in which one member outgrows the band and decides to move on to find challenges to fit her new skills.

It is not uncommon for some people to just have a gift and become enormously better at one thing than the rest of the group. But if the group as a whole is growing and changing as well, the tensions that arise from this can be reduced and the loss of members avoided. Now sometimes it is unavoidable and desirable to lose band members. Perhaps someone has personal goings-on that are always going to prevent them being a full part of the journey, or maybe they are just not good enough. But losing an original band member is often the death knell for many projects. This is not so much the case when you are still establishing yourselves and have yet to break out into the public consciousness. However, for bands that are gigging and releasing material to radio or the stores, losing an original member can often be catastrophic. And mostly it can be avoided.

It is also very important that each member feels part of the life of the band in general; that is to say, not just in the playing of gigs. The day-to-day life of any musical entity involves a lot of activity. There are shows to be booked, practice rooms to be looked after,

Blk Jks. Photo by Warren Van Rensburg



**"A band should always be treated as a small business. If you can't find management then do it yourself until such a time as management finds you."**

Bill Botes, Siren Talent / Breakout

equipment to be maintained, flyers to be designed and made, websites and mailing lists to be looked after and so on. Each member of your outfit could and should be responsible for some aspect of the business life of the band as well. Again, this is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, many groups are unbalanced in terms of creativity. There is more often than not a creative kernel that writes the material and around whose vision the act is centred. If this comprises only one or two people in the unit, over time the others can become demotivated and disinterested as they will feel that they are being dictated to, that they have no say in how things are run, and that they are nothing more than hired hands. But there are many and equally important ways that non-songwriting band members can contribute to the growth and success of your project. These members need to be assigned these responsibilities and everyone needs to buy into their importance and ensure that these tasks are done.

So draw up a contract between your band members that covers two main things: the fact that each member must agree to play a musical role in the band, and that each should be committed and dedicated to that role. This must include being committed to improving skills in order to become as good at what they do as they are capable of becoming. A full discussion of these roles and jobs follows a bit later in this chapter. But for now, remember that when you are setting up your members' agreement, it needs to include these jobs, and that all members must buy into their importance and contribution to the success of the whole.



In most instances, each band member owns and is responsible for the gear that he uses to perform his role. So if you are a DJ, you'd own your own

decks, mixer, cables and headphones; a guitarist his guitars, amplifier, cables and effects pedals; a drummer a set of drums. But it is important to discuss these instruments and pieces of equipment upfront and come to agreement over their maintenance, upkeep and repair.

While it is easy to see who owns what piece of equipment, when it comes to upkeep and repair, who is financially responsible? For example, guitars always need new strings, turntables need new needles and drums need new skins and sticks. In the beginning many bands simply agree that all members should pay for the upkeep of their own gear. But it will soon become clear to you that some members will need to spend more money doing this than others. If you are splitting your earnings equally, they are earning less per show than anyone else, merely because of the instrument they play. A set of drum skins costs way more than a couple of new styluses or a set of guitar strings.

A basic recommendation is that being in the group should never cost anyone any money once the unit has achieved earning potential. This means that no income that the group earns should be split amongst members until such time as the costs that the group's activities incur have been paid off. This includes equipment maintenance and repair costs, rehearsal space and transport. In other words, the group will pay for drum skins, new cables, guitar strings



DJ in the mix. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

and whatever else the band consumes in the act of being the band. Should major equipment failure occur, it is also possible that the band could purchase replacement gear. For example, if an amp blows up, or a turntable is smashed, the group might consider buying the replacement. However, that piece of equipment then becomes communal property and, should the member who uses it choose to leave, she will have to negotiate to buy it from the band.

As mentioned in chapter 5, the other major piece of gear that a band could ultimately own is a public address system (PA). A PA consists of the front of house equipment including the mixing desk and any processing units the engineer might use and the snake

cable taking signals from stage to the desk. The onstage sections include the speakers themselves, the amplifier system, monitors through which your sound is played back on stage, microphones and cables, microphone stands, extension cords etc.

Due to the fact that many venues in South Africa do not have in-house sound systems, many bands are forced to consider whether or not to buy their own. Assuming that your band has considered all the options discussed in Chapter 5 and decided to actually buy a sound system, there needs to be clear agreement on how this important piece of equipment is handled and ultimately owned. There are two basic scenarios. One, the band buys the gear and therefore owns all of it, and is





MXO. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

financially responsible for its upkeep, repair, transport and running. Secondly, one band member could personally contribute all or some of the money required to buy the system. In this case that member is either the full owner or part-owner, with the band becoming the other part-owner.

Owning a PA means more than just having a useful piece of gear at your disposal. It can also act as a source of income for the band. Just as other people hire out sound systems to bands, you could also hire yours out to earn extra money. Of course, this is an entirely new line of business for the band and the risks need to be carefully thought through and managed. However, if your group is only using the equipment one or two nights a week, you could effectively make the equipment pay for itself by hiring it out on nights it is not in use. This money would then be band money that goes into your coffers to help pay for things like guitar strings, petrol, tour accommodation and so on. Of course it does need to be considered that the

more a sound system is used, the more maintenance it needs, which is in itself a cost to the band.

### Earnings

This is the biggest problem factor in any band: money! As in any relationship that goes on for a while, money can be a huge factor in causing conflict and disagreement. And it is for that reason that it is the single most important factor that needs to be sorted out immediately. There is no one golden solution to the myriad of options that present themselves in this area, but here are some of the common challenges, and recommended courses of action that are most likely to keep everyone happy and the band together.

### Total share

Under this kind of agreement, the members agree that all money that the band earns is paid directly to the members immediately. Thus the members become responsible for their own transport costs, equipment maintenance and upkeep, as well as

their own costs for accommodation, food etc. This is often the best solution when you are a new band that has yet to make a reputation for itself and your members likely have day jobs to keep them going. Despite the fact that they then become responsible for all their own costs, many members prefer the idea that they are making at least some money from every gig.

### Share after cost

Under this model the band agrees that certain costs will be paid for by the band before any money is shared. This model is popular for musicians who make more of their living through music and would like to see their playing overheads reduced. For example, the band may undertake to pay for rehearsal space, strings and skins, and petrol money. What remains is paid out equally amongst the members. This has the advantage that each band member is at least getting some cash out for shows, while making sure that the cost of being in the group is kept down.

### Reinvestment.

Many bands with long-term plans will initially go this route. Under the investment agreement, all monies that the band makes are ploughed back into the band. Under this agreement, all equipment, travel, gig and accommodation costs are paid for by the band and no cash is paid out at all. Extra cash is then used to manufacture merchandise, pay for touring or recording time etc., depending on what is on your agenda. This means that, while you take no money out for the effort of songwriting and playing, the band is increasing its potential to earn all the time. The general recommendation is to use this model for a finite period of time only, before starting to pay members directly.

### Earnings split

This is the model that many bands follow once they have established themselves. It is a good model because it balances the need of members to earn money from the band with the need to continually reinvest in equipment,

Rocking out. Photo by Kevin S Flee



merchandise and recording. There are many variations under this model, for example:

#### **A 50-50 split**

Fifty percent of all money earned goes back into the bank account. Fifty percent is split between the band members

#### **Equal member split**

The band is counted as an extra member. So if you are a three-piece, all cash is split four ways; if you are a four-piece it is split five ways and so on. In other words, the band account gets the same amount of cash as each member does.

Bear in mind that you will always need money in the band account to pay for various things and that by taking all cash out of the band all the time, you are committing to paying for these things out of your own pockets. Also remember that there are various revenue streams that the band can earn from: make sure that everyone understands the splits on all these streams. For example a band can earn from door takings or fees for live performances, merchandise sales, album sales, appearance fees, royalties from sales and sponsorship deals. Your agreement needs to cover all these options to prevent disagreements later.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES/ JOBS**

It is very important that all band or group members feel like they have a vested interest in the unit that has formed. Often it is the case that the creative

songwriting team dominates affairs and the other players are left out in the cold. This is not a great strategy for ensuring the longevity of a musical project and it is important to make sure that everyone has a role to play in the musical unit and is committed to the success of that role.

Everyone's primary job in a group is his instrument. It must be agreed that everyone is committed to rehearsing his parts and being as tight as possible as his very first commitment to the band and the other members. But over and above that, it is important for each member to be involved and invested in the business of the band. There are plenty of matters that need to be looked after and you will be surprised at how much else there is for band members to do that can contribute towards the progress and success of your musical endeavour.

#### **Technical manager:**

It is always a good idea to have one person in the band whose job it is to keep an eye on the equipment and peripherals, to assess when new kit is needed, and to keep inventory to make sure that nothing goes missing. This is the person who will count and check cables, check styluses and guitar strings, and keep a record of the state of amps, the PA and any other gear the band owns. Basically it is the job of this person to ensure that there is never an onstage breakdown or shortage, by taking preventative measures when they are necessary.

#### **The Money manager**

No matter what your intra-band and/or management agreements are, it is a good idea to have one person whose job it is to handle money matters on behalf of the band. It is this person's

job to chase up money matters with your agency or manager. On the night it is this person who makes sure you get your money from the door, from the merchandise people or your management. They also make sure that outgoing payments are kept track of, like money for strings and skins and so on.

**"...Build a brand, book your own shows and have a performance contract ready, buy your own PA to cut down on hire costs, be your own record label, copyright your music, set up your own publishing entity and join a performance rights organisation..."**

Bill Botes, Flag Music Collectives

#### **Information manager**

This person is in control of the information collection and distribution that the band needs to do. S/he will make sure your lists are placed at the door and merchandise table at every gig to collect names, email addresses and telephone numbers for your database,

and will capture this information for your systems. This person also makes sure your website/MySpace/Facebook profile is up to date.

#### **Marketing manager**

This individual makes sure that emails/SMSes are sent to your databases, that flyers and posters are designed and distributed for gigs, that news about any activity the band undertakes is written and sent through the right channels (like your publicist, your record company, your database lists etc.). Basically, this is the person who oversees the process of making sure that any activity the band undertakes is disseminated to the big wide world.

#### **Logistics manager**

This band member's job is to make sure that he knows and understands all commitments that involve the band being anywhere. For example, he must always know all the detail about where and when a gig is, or an interview, or an appearance. He must know the report time, soundcheck time, stage time and set length. He must know how the band is going to get anywhere, what time they are travelling, where they are staying and if there is a free meal or not. And it is his job to manage the process of making sure that these obligations are met.

Once again, the extent to which members can and should undertake these obligations depends on how you have set up your band agreements. However, if members are more invested in the total process of the success of the band, their levels of commitment and enthusiasm are far greater than if they just pitch up and are told what to do by one person.



# CHAPTER 8

## IMAGE

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i m a g e

**I**n the modern environment, what an artist or performer looks like has become increasingly important from a marketing perspective. Competition in the marketplace is fierce, global and sophisticated. Many performers have become such recognisable commodities that they have transformed themselves into what marketers refer to as a brand, and they represent a range of products and ideas that are instantly recognisable. Think of an entity like U2 and immediately you get the idea. They have a strong, instantly recognisable visual presence, you know what they stand for thanks to Bono's activism, and they have a long line of recordings and merchandise to back them up. Their tours are carefully crafted, named and promoted as large entities in their own right. Thus they present an image to you that you know, understand and buy into almost instantly.

For a new band, aiming for this kind of thing off the bat is not only impractical but unrealistic and will give the impression of arrogance. There are, however, some good lessons to be learned from how the big boys roll that should definitely be taken on board.



Anyone who reads a magazine will tell you that visual recognition is by far our strongest impulse. Your eye will scan pages to check out the picture long before you read the text. We tend to remember the patterns and colours we see far more strongly than words on paper. So it is with a band. If you turn up in public in radically different outfits every time you play, the chances of your public recognising you from day to day is not good. This is not necessarily to say you should be playing your shows in some kind of uniform, although this is an option that some bands choose to follow. What it does mean is that you need to pay attention to establishing a recurring theme and style that you can stick to in your live appearances. In other words, if you appear one week in a super bling outfit with shades, chains and a hat, wear something similar at subsequent gigs; don't pitch up in jeans and a plaid shirt.



Loyiso Bala. Photo by Warren Van Rensburg

**"For any artist, your image is very important. It is what sets you apart from everyone else in the music industry rat race. It is also how your fans and the business will recognise you as an individual in the midst of the crowd."**

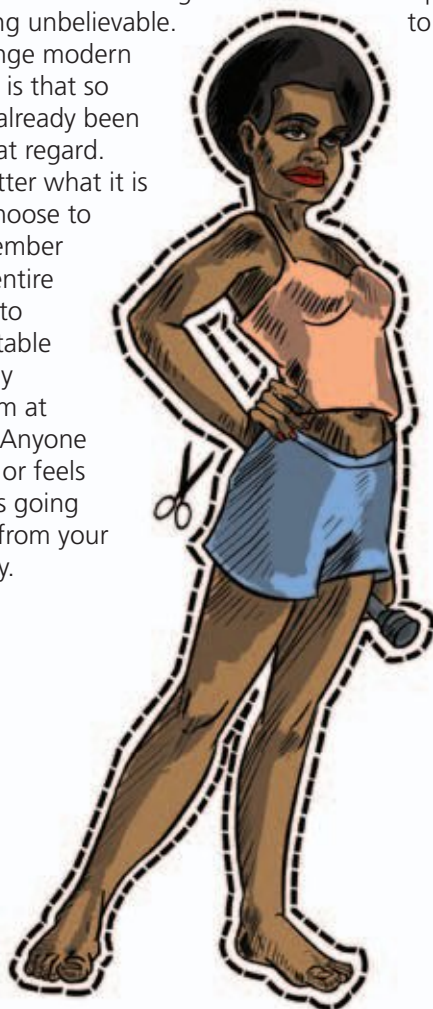
Sibu Molefe, owner, Publicity Stunt, manager of Skwatta Kamp

## BELIEVABILITY

You have to be comfortable in what you wear, and it has to sit well with what you are doing. Turning up dressed like a

hillbilly to drop a dope hip hop set is just not going to be believable. Likewise, trying to play some serious jazz in a glitter covered glam rock jumpsuit is not going to help. Bear in mind however, that turning stereotypes on their heads can be useful from a recognition point of view. For example, the Beatles' whole suit and tie get up in the 60s worked. It was recognisable, consistent and neatly turned establishment ideas on their heads without looking silly or being unbelievable.

The challenge modern artists face is that so much has already been done in that regard. But no matter what it is that you choose to wear, remember that your entire group has to be comfortable so that they can perform at their best. Anyone who looks or feels awkward is going to detract from your believability.



## WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE VS WHO YOU ARE

The issue of a band image is just as important as the signature style of your music, and should also be given as much time as necessary to develop. When one is involved in

a band or group musical project, this can take time as personalities emerge in the mix and influence the whole, and may end up being very different from where you started out. I think this is very important, as it is a key way to avoiding becoming too predictable and generically similar to your peers. If you can allow the natural creative expression of your band to dictate your sound



and your look, your chance of looking and sounding just like everyone else is reduced. The group will have created a core identity that you can refer back to, as opposed to approaching matters with the intent to sound like something or other in order to exploit a trend that is current and cool. A small tip: once trends have become fashion, they are basically over. To imitate them as a new band is to doom yourselves to being out of date. Rather rely on your own creativity to create new trends and get ahead of the curve.

There are a number of aspects that you need to consider when trying to put together a visual image. This is the look that you will carry for probably the next year at the least. It needs to include

how you wear your hair, what you wear off stage and on, and it will feature in your photo shoots, your



artwork and just about everything you do. It needs to speak to every member of your group and everyone needs to be comfortable and look good. Having a strong visual image does not mean that every member needs to look identical or have the same style. I mean, look at what the Village People did! But it does mean that every member needs to be recognisable.

An important factor to remember is that your public needs to buy into this look, which means it must sit well with you. If the group is not comfortable with a look, it will be noticeable and the look will become less convincing. To an extent, no matter what genre you play in, you can wear anything as long as your band can pull it off with confidence and a sense

of style. The moment anyone looks awkward or uncomfortable, you end up not being believable. Why do you want to be believable? Because through your music and performance, you are selling a vision; a way of seeing the world. Just as you have created the music and the lyrics, you can control the look that goes with that in order to reinforce your message or your vision. It is a part of the whole that too few new artists pay attention to.





# CHAPTER 9

## BAND INFO

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band info

**ONCE** the mechanics of the band are sorted out, you need to get out into the world and start playing gigs and spreading the word. Before doing this though, there are a few things that need to be in place so that the right message about the group can be easily and efficiently transmitted. These next four chapters tackle the various areas that need to be covered in order to start making your way in the world as a musical entity. These areas all help with performance, image and how the act is perceived out there in the marketplace. We start off with written sources of information and work our way through the list chapter by chapter from there.

### BIOGRAPHY

The artist biography is the primary tool in the information package that an artist needs, be it as a solo artist, a band, or a freelance musician for hire. It is a personal brochure and the easiest and most versatile marketing tool that can be put together. A biography explains the musical project to the reader and is aimed at media, agents and promoters, other bands and the public. It has many uses and can be placed wherever possible in the media environment.

A good biography starts off by explaining what the band is, what type of music it plays, who is in the band and

what they play. It goes on to give a short synopsis of the band's achievements so far: who it has played with, any airplay of singles, TV appearances and any major festival dates. It is a good idea to name well-known venues that the band has played as well. The style of the biography should also reflect the image and style of the band. If you are a classical quartet, don't use loads of slang and street language, but rather let the language of the biography work for you by giving an impression that is in line with the kind of outfit that you are.

A biography is also the place where any political or social agendas that the group might have can be explained. Explain motivations for forming the group and even go so far as to lay out some goals. For example: to tour the entire country, record an album, release singles to radio, get onto all the major festivals, or whatever is appropriate. It's not generally advisable to boast that you intend to take over the world. Even if this is the general plan, that kind of attitude generally makes the media in particular write you off as unrealistic dreamers with a big attitude.

A biography is not really meant to be reproduced in the media as an article, so it needs to be fact heavy and written in a clear and concise way. It must include all band contact details, including websites and MySpace or Facebook pages. Include email and telephone details and names. The general format looks like this:

## Refiloe And The Rockets

### Biography

#### Para 1

Formed in 2006, Refiloe and the Rockets are a Jozi based outfit playing a hypnotic crossover of chilled out beats and township jive rhythms. Add in some hard rock guitar and the vocals of an angel and you have an idea of where their sound is at.

#### Para 2

Refiloe and The Rockets are of course Refiloe, the golden-voiced frontwoman, with Frik van der Merwe on lead guitar, Sbu on the decks and beat meister Johnny on the electronic rack (programming, keys, effects). Bass is provided by Voyani along with super-deep backing vocals.

In their two-year history, Refiloe and The Rockets have played all the major venues in and around Jozi city such as Rocka, Fuel Cafe, the Crazy 88 and The Bohemian. They have supported Freshlyground, Prime Circle and Goldfish and even played a select slot on the Oppikoppi main stage in 2007.

#### Para 3

Refiloe and The Rockets are committed to creating a South African urban sound like no other, fusing elements of many popular styles into a groove that is uniquely Jozi urban. With their crossover sonic and visual styles they are aiming for national fame and fortune and keeping their options open for the overseas market. Believers in the idea of an emerging, shared social identity among the youth, Refiloe and The Rockets are a truly representative band. They have no creed, no leader, and no politics except being open-minded, open-hearted and slaves to the beat.

Since breaking onto the live scene they have been continuously writing material with a view to releasing an album in mid-2009. Demo singles can already be heard on campus radio around the country and on their MySpace page.

#### Para 4

In short, Refiloe and The Rockets are the real deal: an emerging credible voice in the desert of South African youth culture, a fusion of all that has gone before, yet a unique melange that is right NOW.

#### Contacts:

For more information, bookings and interviews, contact:

Fred

083 555 5555

Fred@therockets.co.za

www.refiloeandtherockets.co.za

www.Myspace.com/refiloeandtherockets

Join our Facebook group!

### Press/news releases

Over and above a biography, all artists need to have material that can be sent mainly to media, but also to fans and to websites that keep people up to date with activity. These are called press or news releases. The object of these documents is to transmit information about a specific event or happening in a clear, concise and easy-to-read manner. It is generally focused on only one subject at a time and should be no longer than one page in length. The object of this document is to excite interest and attention and cause the reader to want to know more about the act, the event, the happening or whatever it is that is talked about in the release.

For example, if a month's worth of gigs have been booked, create a release that announces all four or eight shows, and talks about what good shows these are going to be and how important it is to see them.

At the end of the release, give all the details of each show as follows:

Event: (name of show)  
Date: (exact day and month of the show)  
Venue: (full name and street address of the venue)  
Contact: (a phone number for the venue or promoter)  
Line-up: (all the bands that are on the bill that night, starting with your band name)  
Time: (including what time the doors open at the venue)  
Cover: (what the ticket price at the door is for the show and if pre-booking is available)

#### For example:

Event: Jozi Rocks  
Date: Saturday 19 September 2009  
Venue: Roxy Rhythm Bar, Main Rd, Melville  
Contact: 011 726 6019  
Line-up: Refiloe and The Rockets, Stardust, Jammin  
Time: 20:00  
Cover: R50

Other topics can include the following: announcing a record deal, releasing a song to radio, getting booked to play a festival, signing a sponsorship deal, clinching a big international support show, launching your website, going on tour, clinching a management deal, getting onto the charts of a radio station or receiving significant airplay on a number of stations etc. Basically, anything that is new and newsworthy should be written up as a release and sent out to the media and the public. Once again, the

**"The quality of music on a new act's album plays a significant role in convincing audiences to want to see them live on stage. Too many acts sound too desperate when they approach journalists."**

Bongani Mahlangu – Sowetan Sunday World



Holly And The Woods. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

purpose of this is twofold. One is just to keep word out on the street and your band's presence alive. It is also to show you are growing and developing. What this does is create serious consciousness of your act in both the media and public. You can't always gig every week, but you can most certainly be seen to be busy by making these kinds of press announcements. But remember, no one enjoys having their time wasted by receiving constant non-news-related spam that is masquerading as news.

#### Web copy

Online content is only increasing in importance in the music market of today. While it is not yet a huge factor in South Africa due to our own limited online audience and slow connectivity, it is growing fast. In order to be positioned to take advantage of this

growth, being organised for online access now is highly recommended. Your online presence is a bridge out of South Africa and into the global market and it is advisable to make sure that this bridge is solid, comprehensive, informative and accurate. The music business twists and turns and you can never be sure where your next break is going to come from.

The material you put into the online environment thus becomes very important indeed. Also bear in mind that since the advent of community networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, it's not just about running a website for your band, but about creating and leveraging a community of supporters using your content and the band's activities. In fact, the trick has become how to leverage your band activity into ongoing online content in





a manner that grows your community, and then to turn that community into a buying public that comes to your shows, purchases your CDs and merchandise, and acts as a great advert for your band.

For a band website the absolute essentials are your band biography, your discography of released work, band contact details and a schedule of gigs. Since you will already be writing press/news releases as discussed above, you will also have these at your disposal. The trick with websites of all kinds is to keep them fresh and current. A site

**"Avoid phones unless it's absolutely imperative. Most entertainment journalists are in junior positions so their ability to make an interesting story if they only know you from the phone is not that good. A face-to-face in an interesting place always makes for a better story for both people."**

Therese Owen – chief music writer,  
Independent Newspaper Group

that still has the same front page two months after the first visit is not going to generate much in the way of traffic. But if you are continually updating your content, adding stories, pictures and perhaps even MP3s and links, readers will return more regularly to keep up to date. A static web page is soon forgotten.

This is how MySpace and Facebook

operate, so use the same principles on the band web page, and don't forget to keep your MySpace and Facebook pages equally busy and up to date. There is some speculation as to whether a band needs a web page if you have Facebook and MySpace. I myself remain undecided over this, and discuss it further in chapter 15. You must, whatever your online platform, make at least one update per week. Make it the same day of the week too, for predictability's sake. Even if you just add a new gig every week, make those changes and make them clear on your front page so that idle visitors can notice them. Use the fact that you are exhibiting plenty of online movement to recruit new fans. Make sure they can easily add you as friends or join your mailing list on all your online platforms.

#### **Mailing list/newsletter**

One of the critical tools at a band's disposal is your own database of people who have agreed to give you their contact details and who you can therefore talk to directly using email and SMS. This database, or mailing list, is something that you will build up over time through gigs, online activity and networking and is something that every member of the band needs to pay attention to.

Firstly, the band members must put their heads together in one go and start a list with the email addresses of their friends and family who want to be kept up to date on news and live performances. Make two separate lists, one with cellphone numbers for SMSes and one with email addresses.

Enter them all into a spreadsheet so that you can keep track of them. Then the trick is to turn those few names into thousands, by encouraging other people to sign up to your mailing list

so that you can talk to them. This kind of direct marketing is probably the most powerful way you have of developing your name and reputation. One, because you are talking directly to actual individuals who asked to hear about you and two, because this is the kind of communication that goes viral: that is, that the recipients of this kind of conversation are likely to forward it to their contacts and so on and so on, spreading your message far beyond the reaches of your original list. Just as on Facebook, you want to recruit as many friends as possible and for that you need to have as many phone numbers and email addresses as possible so that you can reach as many people as possible.

The reason why you want to do all this is because of the immediacy of the contact. As noted above, these are people who have asked to be kept in touch. They have opted in to the communication chain. Therefore, they are already interested in your band. Your job then lies in making sure they stay interested, that they recommend you to others and that you are able to sell things to them to further your career. What you want to sell are firstly entries to your shows and, secondly, your records, merchandise and downloads. You don't have to have online facilities to sell records and merchandise – all you have to do is get people to shows where these are available. And make it worth their while to be on the list by offering mailing list-only specials, like discounted entry, first bite at new merchandise and releases, mailing list competitions and the like. The content you will forward to this mailing list is pretty much what you are using for your website and press releases, but changed slightly in tone so that you address a single reader directly as a personal communication.

Once you have these phone numbers and email lists, set them up in proper mechanisms so that you can use them easily and also add or remove names, and make sure you keep two copies of the lists in separate locations so that you always have backup. You can buy SMS bundles to send the phone messages and there are various bulk email services that you can use to send your email messages – or even just set up an email group on the email program on your PC. Bottom line is that

**"Never, ever, say: 'Can we make this quick please, I gotta be somewhere else.' I once punched a kwaito artist in the chest for asking that. I am here to work. You are here to work. Media is as much a part of your business as recording the music and playing live is."**

Therese Owen – chief music writer,  
Independent Newspaper Group

you need to talk regularly to your list to keep them interested in your band. Do not, however, spam them. That is, do not mail info with no real purpose, or with a purpose other than business related to your band. They have trusted you with their contact information; you have to honour that if you want to keep people on your list. Don't forget that service providers will blacklist you if your

recipients complain of spam from your server. If you send out a message once a week, you should be fine. More than that is going to annoy your audience, but even once a month is still enough to keep them interested.

Also remember to keep it simple. You can send electronic flyers to this list, as well as plain text messages. The option of carefully designed HTML emails is also there if you can afford it. Whatever format you use, make sure most of your readers can actually read the format, and do not allow fancy design and technology to overpower your message. Keep it clear and concise and easy to understand. Make sure you have a clear call to action. "Come to our show! Buy our CD! Sign up for this special offer! Enter our competition!" It is when subscribers don't understand why you are emailing them that they get irritated and want to get off your list.

### Gig guides

Most newspapers, websites and even radio and TV stations offer free live show listings to artists and their management. All you have to do is watch the show, listen to the radio and read the gig pages in order to collect the information that you need to be able to send your band's information to this amazing resource free of charge. Once you have all the email addresses, you just create a new mailing list like your newsletter one and you can send your gigs to them on a regular basis so that it will appear on the radio, TV and in the newspapers.

To optimise your reach into this area, once you have the contact details send a quick email introducing your band and requesting to know when their deadline is each week and what day of the week is best to regularly send your information so that they can best

use it. Secondly, look carefully at the format they use in their publication or programme. If you send your information in the wrong format or with information missing, chances are they won't use it.

Generally they need your gigs laid out in the following format:

**Event:** (name of show)

**Date:** (exact day and month of the show)

**Venue:** (full name and street address of the venue)

**Contact:** (a phone number for the venue or promoter)

**Line-up:** (all the bands that are on the bill that night, starting with your band name)

**Time:** (include what time the doors open at the venue)

**Cover:** (what the ticket price at the door is for the show and if pre-booking is available)

Many radio stations and even newspapers have websites where you can actually add your gigs into their database yourself. If you visit Highveld Stereo's site, or 5fm's or the Mail & Guardian's, you will find a feature allowing you to enter your information directly online. It is checked by editorial staff for accuracy and to ensure that it isn't spam, but this is a great way to make sure word of your shows gets out.

You can also increase this media database to include music writers at magazines and other media outlets, and you can send your press releases and news stories to them as well. You will find that once you start doing this, the journalists will start coming to your shows as well. This is how a media profile can be developed using your gig and news information intelligently.



# CHAPTER 10

## PHOTOGRAPHS

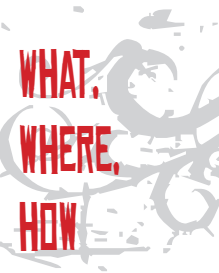
A good set of photographs that accurately reflect your look, attitude and style, is one of the most useful tools to get your new group or project into the public eye and generate momentum for your career. Photographs go a long way and can be used for media purposes, websites, posters, flyers and record sleeves, so don't be scared to make sure you get excellent ones.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE

Photographs are important to musicians because, in an environment where a member of the public may not be in a position to listen to your music, they can say a lot about you and your music. As visual images they are also the first thing the eye travels to on a page of print.

As a backup to information you are sending out to media they are an invaluable space filler that can be used to plug unexpected gaps in publications (assuming they are good enough) and create the tonal variety that media personnel are looking for in their page layouts. But most importantly they create instant visual recognition for your group amongst the public. Your

photographs on websites, newsletters, newspapers, posters and what have you will mean that the public recognises you both on and off stage and, once they recognise you, it means they can tell their friends who you are as well.



These days your photographs will primarily be in digital form – that is, images stored on a computer or cellphone that can be transmitted via email, download or MMS. It is always

a good idea to create some physical pictures as well so that, should you not be in a position to use electronic communications or indeed not have access to them, you can still give people physical photographs that they can then scan and use. In their digital form, you ideally need two versions of each picture; a high resolution file, and a smaller, low resolution file. If you're feeling thorough you can make a medium-weight one as well.

Your high resolution file is a big .jpg file of around 3MB in size. This is big enough to be reproduced as a full page in a magazine. It should be set at 300dpi and consist of several thousand pixels and not appear grainy at 100% magnification. Photos of this size are generally to be sent to magazines and

newspapers, your album sleeve designer and flyer or poster designer. Basically anything that will end up in printed form needs a high resolution file to start with in order to give your designer flexibility with sizing and to ensure that your final printed product is not blurry or pixelated.

Your low resolution file is a much smaller .jpg file, at 72dpi and only around 80kb in final size. When reducing your files to this size, be sure that they do not get grainy and blurry in the reduction process. The image can still be 5 or 7cm tall and wide, but must be a small digital file. These smaller files are for use in online or email communications. For example, if you create a press release that you want to send out to your email database, you cannot paste in a 3MB file and send it to multiple recipients. For a start, your own email system will probably battle to handle the load and secondly, it is considered bad email etiquette to send large files to media unsolicited. Make it clear in your message that high resolution photos are available on request and send separately only if asked for. You also don't want your fans cursing you because your newsletter took 20 minutes to download thanks to a string of enormous pictures. So make all your pics you want to send via email nice and small. For your website, your resolution also only needs to be 72dpi because this is the resolution computer monitors display at. Anything higher is unnecessary overkill that makes your web pages heavier and slower to load and chews up bandwidth.

Jahseed from Bongo Maffin. Photo by Kevin S Flee



**"When I photograph artists, there is a lot that I need to think about. As far as image being important goes, that all depends. If it's just 'a job', it helps. You just meet their expectations and demands. The scary thing with an image is that sometimes an artist expects you to break or remake that mould, or just prevent it from getting stale; and that is a responsibility that should have little to do with the photographer, as far as 'responsibilities' go."**

Liam Lynch, professional photographer

## WHAT TO AVOID

If you bear in mind that the main objective with photographs is to project your band image, give an intimation of your style and to make a good and clear impression, then you can imagine they are some fairly obvious things to try and avoid. But there are also some less obvious technical aspects that you need to stay away from as well.

Avoiding clichés is the biggest thing with pics. In other words, avoid using locations and styling that have been done to death in the past. The main culprits that come to mind are:

- on top of a mine dump/building/hill looking serious and cool
- in a condemned building
- on railway tracks
- in the countryside looking pensive
- dressing in period costume at a historical site.

From the above you probably get the general idea. There are just some things that have been done so often and in such a cheesy fashion that you really should rather stay away. But more than just the locations, you need to avoid the temptation to try and over-style yourselves so that you end up looking unnatural and uncomfortable. It worked in the 80s when that was the overriding style ethos, but these days you'll find that a good, clear pic of the band looking at ease will serve you far better.

From a technical perspective there are also some simple things that can be avoided that, even if you are working with a professional photographer, you need to address. Bear in mind that the purpose of those pics is to be printed in magazines, newspapers, websites and

so on. Therefore they need to be quite simple, uncluttered and very, very clear. The tendency, especially with new bands and young photographers, is to get too carried away with being arty and clever. While this may make the photographer look good and result in photographs that could be works of art, it probably will not suit the task at hand: that is, being suitable for reproduction in publications.

Make sure your photographs are composed in a very tight group. Make sure you all stand very close together, with little space between you. Also make sure that your photographer is putting as little background in the frame as possible. These pics are about you, not the lovely scenery around you. While it is nice to have a couple of full length shots, concentrate on portrait type pics, from mid-chest up or even closer. Make sure you get not only group shots, but individual portraits as well. Do not take shots that feature the band on the horizon. It's a waste of time and energy as no publication will ever reproduce it and you will look like a gang of dwarves, not a band.

In order to look as natural and comfortable as possible, there are some tricks you can learn. Try not posing for seconds at a time while the photographer squeezes off a few shots. Rather keep moving and talking and when your camera guy is ready, hit a pose, move, hit another and so on. You may feel like a self-conscious wannabe model doing it, but the movement will make sure you don't look like a freeze-dried corpse. When having close-up shots taken, look away from camera until the very moment the photographer says NOW and is ready to shoot, then look swiftly into the lens with whatever expression is required. Again, this is to avoid painted-on cheesy smiles and forced, serious grimaces.



Fokofpolisiekar. Photos by Liam Lynch

Same band, same photographer, totally different effects



# CHAPTER 11

## PLAYING LIVE

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playing live

**THERE** is a lot more to playing live than just stepping onto a stage to play your songs. Here we take a good look at the multitude of factors that are involved in the act of playing live. As beginners, you will need to be working hard on your actual live performance, on getting gigs and on making sure that your live sound is as good as it can be. A lot of this will start to come naturally once you are in the routine of playing live regularly, but in order to make a good impression on the scene from the word go, the extra work recommended here will go a long way.

### PERFORMANCE

In an interview in South Africa, Gavin Rossdale of Bush claimed that there are basically only two things over which an artist has control:

songwriting and performance. The best way to ensure that you are competitive, he claims, is to make sure you write the very best songs you can and to make sure you deliver the very best live performances you can, every time.

The music industry globally has spent the last few years shifting its emphasis back to the live performance and there is a chance that the entire industry as it has existed since the 40s is about to collapse. Live performance has arguably not been as important to musicians,

in about 30 or 40 years as it is now. Here are some very solid performance tips that will help you get the best out of yourself and your band live, and which will help you wade through the competition that lies between you and success.

It doesn't sound very rock n roll, but perform sober. Your reactions are quicker, you are more alert to outside influences and you can adapt faster. When you are drunk, you imagine things are going well, don't really notice when things are going wrong, and tend to exist in a small experiential bubble that emanates from your own imagination. Avoid it: you need to be sharp, reactive and alert when on stage. Stay sober. This way not only can you achieve and maintain a consistent level of performance on stage, but the party afterwards is that much sweeter for the delay. Bear in mind that the stage is your office and you have an obligation to deliver the service for which you have been hired. Take that seriously and use it to motivate yourself.

The biggest problem with new bands is that they honestly have no idea of what they look like live and what they need to change. The best advice I can give is to rehearse in the same stance you would be in if you were on stage. As previously discussed, you must rehearse what you are going to do on stage, as you will be doing it in order to get comfortable. To help you with this concept, try and find a place to rehearse every now and then where you

Taxi Violence. Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**"The best way to persuade a venue owner to book you is to present a decent package to the owner that shows off who you are and what you do. Arrange to personally deliver a package with at least a photograph, a press release or band bio, a CD, contact details and credible preSs clippings/comments."**

Brad Holmes, owner, The Bassline, Newtown, Jhb



Bloodline. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

either perform in front of a wall-length mirror or borrow a video camera from a friend, colleague or relative and record your rehearsal. I guarantee that from the first time you try this there will be plenty of cringeworthy moments that you can work on. What sort of style and type of performance you want to give out there is entirely up to you, but make sure you rehearse it. Even the best of ideas will not always work live in front of a crowd when tried out for the first time. Practise your moves with the band in the rehearsal room and ask every member for input. Save yourself some face and do the hard work behind the scenes. This way, even as a new band, your moves can be polished and credible and give the audience the impression

that you are something worth watching, no matter how little they know your music.

Many musicians are scared of performance, which is fair enough. A lot of people are nervous of the idea of appearing in front of others. Bear in mind, however, that nervousness is a good thing to a certain extent. It gets the adrenalin running. It energises you and puts you in a “fight or flight” place that is excellent from a motivational point of view. The trick is to embrace it and use it for your own benefit. To deal with anxiety on a more practical level, run through your set in your head, noting what needs to happen where. Breathe deeply and slowly and focus on what needs to be done during your

performance. When on stage, do not be distracted by how many faces are in front of you (whether overwhelmingly many or disappointingly few). Focus instead on one face at a time, making and holding contact with that person. You don’t have to make eye contact, just don’t dart your eyes continuously around the room. This has the effect of calming you by slowing your actions and also makes you look relaxed and connected to the crowd. You can look for friends at first to use them as your anchors and move from there. Make sure that you know what you need to play well enough that you can afford to perform. If you don’t, any amount of dancing, yelling and moving is only going to disrupt your playing and thereby further damage your performance. Know your stuff – be it a lead break, the drum changes, the lyrics or where the scratches come in. Know it like the back of your hand so that you are at liberty to perform. You don’t need to be worrying about your ability to actually play the music and performing it all at the same time!

## HOW TO GET GIGS

This question is one that seems to stump many a new band. There are two key factors that you need to bear in mind with starting to play live and getting gigs. Firstly, you need to have a plan and secondly, you need to do some homework.

When you think that you have rehearsed enough and you have enough songs to play a complete half-hour to forty-five-minute set, then you need to decide how you want to approach

gigging. By putting together a simple six-month plan, you can set your group some short-term goals and work hard towards distinct deliverables. This has the dual effect of motivating everyone and setting a bar against which you can compare yourselves in the future. As a starting point you could decide that for three months you want to play one show a month. The idea behind playing so few is to make sure you have time to learn from whatever happens on stage. Then for the second three months, aim for twice a month. This six-month period will give your outfit nine live shows, which you can use as experience to learn from and grow.

In addition to deciding the frequency of shows for these first six months, you must also plan what kind of shows you want to play. Do you want to try some anonymous audition nights on a Tuesday night? Do you want to get support slots with bigger bands or play in a multi-band line-up? Since this is the learning phase of your gigging career, go for a mix of shows. Out of the nine shows you want to play, try and make two of them support slots for better-known bands. Play a couple of freebies just for the live experience and then try and play with other bands who are maybe slightly better established than you. Also make sure you play a range of different venues.

Once you have this plan in place, you are ready to actually start getting gigs. This is where the homework comes in. By this stage, you will know what style you are playing and have an idea of where you want to go. Now you need to establish who you can conceivably play with and where the venues are in your town that host live music. The Mail & Guardian gig guide is a good place to start. Not only is it comprehensive, featuring a range of genres and venues,





HHP. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

it also gives addresses and telephone numbers so you can get in touch with the venues. Read this for a couple of weeks so you can get a feel for the venues that typically host your style of music and then start going there. If your town doesn't feature in this guide, check all your local press, check with your local radio station and search online. Try calling anyone you know who plays music to source the venues that way.

When you visit the venues you have identified, check out the sound. See if there's an engineer, watch the bands and see what they do. Make an effort to meet people. Ask who does the bookings, speak to the engineer and, most importantly, speak to the bands that are playing and their managers. This is all done to give you as much information about the place as possible and to build relationships within the industry. Making friends with other bands means there are people you can approach for shows and their managers

know who they can book for support. It also means that when you call up to try and book a gig they already know who you are. Even if they don't remember precisely, being able to say that you met on such and such a night through such and such a person makes you less anonymous than just another band on the phone. It also proves that you are serious and prepared to work to make sure you get the right venue.

In order to book a show you need to demonstrate to the agent/promoter/club owner that you are serious, can play and can pull a crowd. To do this you need a set of materials as laid out in chapter 9. This of course includes your biography (and it needs to be updated regularly), a photo or two of the band and preferably a demo recording of your music. These items together show that you have spent time thinking about the band and you have spent money on it as well. All of which means that you have a vested interest and are less likely to not show up. When you have played no shows at

all, getting booked without a demo is hard, but not impossible. This is where speaking to other bands comes in.

But generally you will approach the person responsible for booking shows and ask when s/he has open slots available to book new bands. Deliver your materials and explain that you are a new band looking to make a start and that you are keen to open for bigger bands or play with a couple of other acts on any one night. Make it clear that, while you are professional, you are also enthusiastic and flexible. Assuming

**"As a venue owner I will always take an artist with a manager more seriously. Artists should concentrate on their music and let the manager/booking agent concentrate on business and gigs."**

Brad Holmes, owner, The Bassline, Newtown, JHB

this person is happy with what you say and ask for they will give you a date. Make sure that this date goes into the venue's roster or timetable of shows and that you record the date and time correctly. To make sure that you also don't get confused at any stage,

take a copy of the booking checklist as supplied on the next page and fill in each applicable area as you talk. Key questions to ask are: "Are a PA and engineer supplied or not? What lighting is available? Is a door person supplied? What is the financial deal: will a guarantee be paid or will you earn a percentage of the door? Are there other bands playing? Get their contact details. Who is doing the marketing, and what marketing is being planned? Is there a contact name and number that you can use in order to fine-tune all the details?" Once you have this information, you can go back and start work. Make sure to call a few days later to confirm the date telephonically. This will serve two purposes. Once again, it is the professional thing to do. Secondly, it makes sure that the date is in fact booked and that there are no conflicts, so you can proceed with the other arrangements with confidence.

To get a gig like this you may well need to be able to boast of previous shows. This is where knowing other bands becomes crucial. For your first couple of shows, try and get to play with other bands that are already booking regular shows. Ask to open for them, to play a short set and to help out wherever you can. By doing this you can learn everything you can from them, get some crucial experience and start to build a fan base. If when you speak to a club owner on your own you can list three or four other bands with whom and venues where you have played already, they will be far more amenable to letting you play.

No matter how you are booking your shows, remember to make sure you get all the facts up front and in detail. Once you have this, put it all into one document for ease of reference, then send this document to the person

## Gig Confirmation Checklist

	Details	Additional Notes
Venue		
Address		
Phone number		
Contact name		
Date of performance		
Deal: Door or guarantee		
PA: Supplied or rented		
Sound Engineer contact details		
Backline		
Lighting		
Soundcheck time		
Performance time		
Line-up		
Other acts' contacts		
Cover charge		

responsible for the booking and ask them to check it. An example of a booking checklist is provided above.

sound as good as you can from the word go.

The first tip is to make sure you understand what is available. Many venues provide a PA for you to play through, but not all of them do. You need to know what is supplied, what it is and why it is important. This information is crucial for when you have to hire sound for venues that do not supply.

A PA is roughly divided into two parts:

**Front of house**

This includes speakers, amps, the mixing desk and any processing units the engineer might use, and the "snake" cable taking signals from stage to the desk.

**On stage**

The monitors through which your sound is played back so you can each hear yourselves play, plus microphones and cables, microphone stands, extension cords etc.

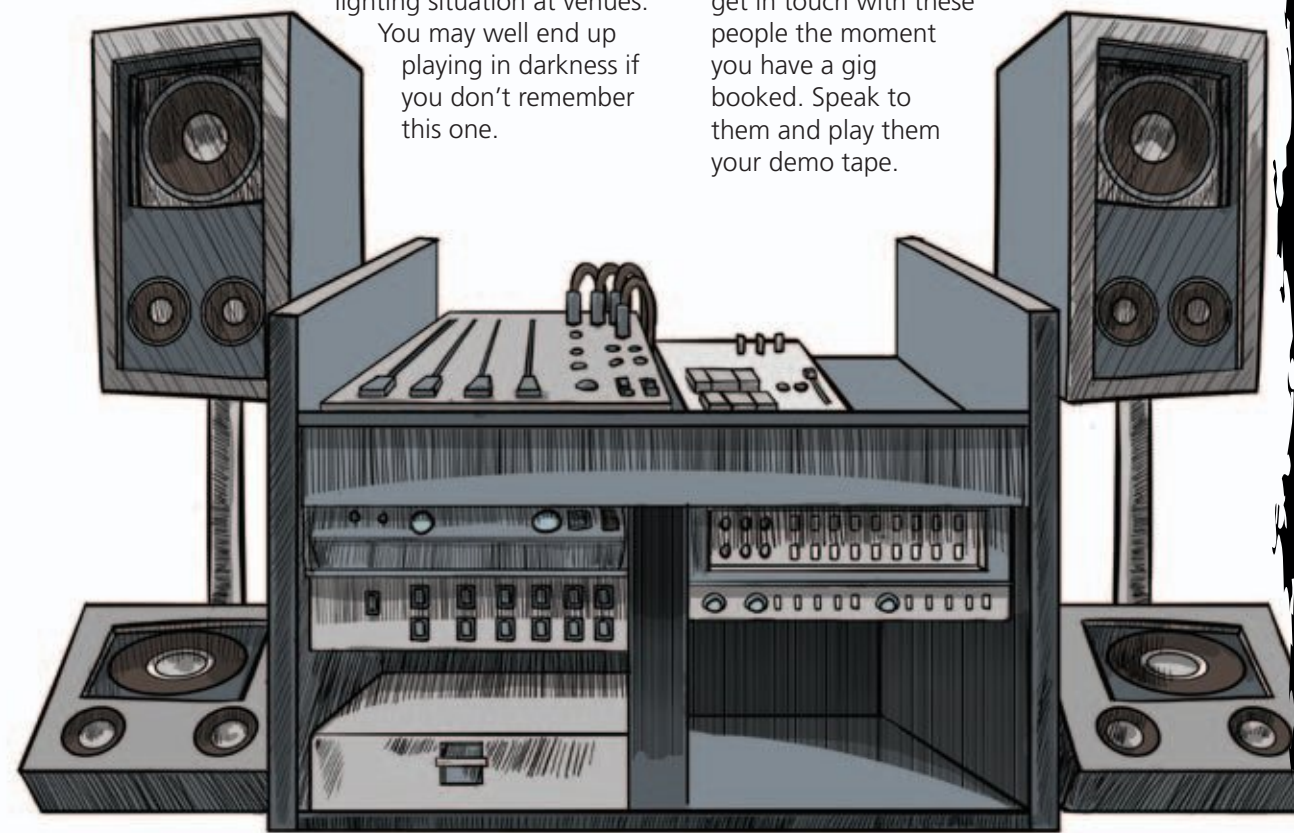
The equipment the band actually plays on, for example, drum kits, guitar amps and instruments, is referred to as backline. It is usually only at festival gigs that backline is all provided. In a club situation you will either be required to bring your own or to share with other performers on the bill.

Although not part of the sound rig, also be sure to check out the lighting situation at venues.

You may well end up playing in darkness if you don't remember this one.

The first step towards ensuring good sound is therefore to make sure you understand what is supplied and what must be brought by the band. If you don't have the right equipment, you will never sound any good at all. Familiarise yourself with PA systems. You don't have to be able to run one, but develop an understanding of the difference between a monitor and a speaker, a mic cable and a speaker cable, an amplifier and a processing unit. The more you know, the less surprises will confront you at a show. Also consider that no one likes to work with a clueless person, so your knowledge will also endear you to those you work with, making repeat work likely.

Secondly, consider who is going to be operating the sound while you are performing. Again, some venues provide a resident sound engineer to take care of this, but this is not always the case. Find out if it is and get in touch with these people the moment you have a gig booked. Speak to them and play them your demo tape.



**SOUND**

The quality of sound is an issue that has sunk many aspirations over the years and there really is no excuse for poor sound. Money is an issue, but with planning, foresight and preparation, you should be able to overcome the challenges and make sure that you





Bloodline. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

Basically make sure that you can form a rapport with them and that they understand your needs. If there is no resident engineer I advise you bring your own. Alternatively, find out if any of the acts you are playing with has an engineer you can use. A good engineer is a highly valuable part of the team that will begin to form around a successful performance unit. If you can recruit an engineer as part of your team, you have someone on your side who can make sure you sound perfect every single time you step on stage, no matter where that is in the world. And you can concentrate on the music, not the sound. A good engineer's value cannot be overstated.

Once you know and understand the dynamics of what you are dealing with in terms of live sound, there are a few basic tips for good sound that years of experience provide. Do not crank your onstage sound up too loud

is tip number one. Many guitarists are worried about hearing themselves and turn their amps up really loud. Guys, this is what monitors are for. Loud onstage sound means vocal monitors have to be turned up too high, which results in onstage feedback and a wash of mushy sound, rather than the kind of clear, differentiated sound that is ideal. Playing with a live drummer can present challenges, as many young drummers can only play at one volume and still stay in time – very loud. Your drummer needs to be adaptable to sound conditions and play harder or softer according to the venue size. Of course he still needs to stay in time, which can often be a challenge. Make sure you can hear yourself in your monitors very clearly before soundcheck is over. Once a venue fills up, ambient sound can often change the nature of the onstage mix. If, during your soundcheck, you could only just hear yourself through

the monitors, you will not be able to hear yourself during the gig. Monitors can always be turned down quickly. Redoing your levels live is tedious, bores the audience and looks unprofessional.

If you don't have a drummer and play off backing tracks, you need to bear some technical issues in mind. First of all, do not use a CD player as your backing track delivery system. They just skip too much. Secondly, make sure your backing tracks are mixed and set up for a live PA. The nature and size of PA speakers are very different to that of studio monitors and headphones. What sounds wonderful in your studio will typically sound mushy and overly busy through a live PA. This is due mainly to the frequency difference between PA and studio monitor outputs. Take your track onto a live PA and remix accordingly; it's worth the effort for the improved results.

In order to deliver your very best live performance, you need to be absolutely confident that you sound good out in front where the audience will be. This is why soundcheck was invented – to look after your interests as a band. As rock 'n' roll as it might be to appear late, storm on stage and slay the crowd with your music, you really need to put in some good graft first to make sure that what comes out the speakers is an orchestrated sonic onslaught and not the sound of slaughtered cats. Always make sure that soundcheck times are scheduled in your show bookings and do not be late for these. Often when playing with a big band, they will soundcheck and try to insist that you just use their

settings. In these cases request at least a line check – where the sound engineer simply checks that all your cables and connections are functioning properly – once their soundcheck is over, so that you can get your instruments set up and reassure yourselves that everything can be heard. In most cases, the general sound balance will be good and the sound ready to go, but if you don't at least do a line check, you run the risk of not having one or other of your instruments or vocalists coming through for the first couple of songs. Make this agreement with the sound engineer and the manager, so that the big act is not inconvenienced or bothered in any way.

Key things to look out for in soundcheck:

- Be prepared, know what sound you want and how to get it.
- If you are working with a new engineer, try to get a copy of your music to him or her in advance of the show.
- Make sure there are adequate power points on stage and that you know where they are.
- Always have spare guitar cables and kettle plugs for your amps.
- Always carry your own marked extension cables.
- Ensure your onstage monitor sound is top notch before the venue fills up.
- If you move around a lot during a show, move around the stage during soundcheck to look for feedback areas.
- Sing out as loud during soundcheck as you will during the show.
- Once the engineer seems happy with the sound, let one of your band members step into the audience area to make sure that it meets your own expectations.





Kicking it live at The Bassline. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

- Rather take a bit longer on soundcheck than risk bad sound during a show.
- Make sure the engineer makes notes of your settings. Take a picture of the mixing desk on your phone or digital camera to make sure.
- Ensure you have as many copies of your set list as there are band members, plus one for the sound engineer.

to make a living off gigging, ideally you'd play as often as four times a week. But the truth is that in South Africa there are not enough venues to sustain a host of bands all playing four nights a week. In very short order the average punter would have seen their favourite band once a week for the last three months and would probably have gotten bored. A key factor to consider here is that, for most South Africans, watching live music is not really an entertainment option like going clubbing or a movie. Many more people need to be converted to the idea that it is something that you do for fun, and many more venues need to open in the many towns around the country to afford original bands the opportunity to make more money from playing live.

So when gauging how often a band can afford to play, the members need to

aim for the following: playing enough to get the name recognised and make people aware of you, and not playing so much that people stop coming because they are bored. The trick, of course, is to get the balance right: to play to the right people and make sure that your performance is top-class on every occasion. As a general piece of advice, never play the same venue in the same town more than once a month. If you are going to play in the same town two or three times, make sure that this is in venues that are in different parts of town, so as to spread your reach to different residential areas.

New bands especially are intimidated by the idea of playing outside their hometowns, but you really shouldn't be. The reception is often warmer outside your hometown and South Africa has so many smaller towns around each major centre that you can get out and about without going too far, or overplaying your home turf. Take Johannesburg as an example. You can play the central areas, the northern suburbs, the south (including Soweto) the East Rand and the West Rand. Then you have Pretoria, Centurion, Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp and the Vaal Triangle all within two hours' drive of the city. That's ten areas you can play without playing the same venue twice. If you play two venues a week, it will be over one month before you hit the same part of town again and if there is more than one venue in each area, you can stretch it even further. You might think that this is only true of Johannesburg because of its size, but if you take most major areas and apply the same thinking, you will see that it's true mostly everywhere. Take Bloemfontein: there are Welkom, Kimberley and a host of small towns in the area. In Durban there are the North Coast and South Coast towns,

the Midlands and Pietermaritzburg. In Cape Town you have Stellenbosch, the northern suburbs, the city, and Hermanus, Somerset West and Gordon's Bay down the road. It just requires the correct attitude. If you as a local band make the effort to find and develop these venues, then you can act as host for out-of-town bands and together you can grow the local scenes, making sure there is a living to be made for everyone.

So the reality is that you can play quite a bit, even as a new band. But always be wary of overplaying. The truth of the matter is that when you are successful and in demand, you can play as much as you like and you can move and tour at will. But when you are still building a reputation, you need to be slightly careful. You must still play a lot, because your live shows are the best word of mouth advertisement you have, but beware of exhausting your audience.



This section deals with how to behave before, after and during live shows. I call them Rock Star Rules as a kind of ironic reference to the attitude some

bands have towards their fans. Some of these ideas may at first seem quite stuck-up, but the motivations behind them are pure business and practicality and have nothing to do with ego. A big part of this set of behaviours has to do with vision and planning. By reading this book, you are stating a desire: to start a band and be successful with it. If you want to go far, you want to be famous and sell lots of records. In order



to do that, you need people to perceive you in a very specific way, and that is what a lot of The Rock Star Rules are all about. Your audience must perceive you as famous and just out of reach, no matter that you are not. This is achieved not by being arrogant and conceited, but by adopting one or two methods and thinking ahead a bit. Being well prepared pays more dividends than having good sound. It creates a perception, an aura that your audience will pick up on and interpret. The trick is to give them the right signals so that they become your biggest free adverts, your viral marketing campaign, brand ambassadors and supporters all rolled into one.

### Rule 1

*Never be hanging out in the venue when it opens and the audience begins to enter.*

This is a simple one that covers a multitude of evils. For a start, the unspoken part of this is: make sure soundcheck is done before the doors open. There is nothing worse for an audience than having to witness soundcheck. It is boring. It is irritating. It is very unprofessional. The other good reason for this rule is also very practical. There is nothing more nerve-racking than watching a crowd slowly trickle in. You are probably nervous enough as it is about your performance without worrying about the size of the crowd. Let the promoter, your manager (chapter 17), and the nightclub worry about that. You are there to deliver a live show and that is where your focus should be. You need to find a place where you can all go after soundcheck to relax, do a last minute check of the set list, get into your gigging gear and generally focus your minds on the coming show. You want to come back

to the venue with half an hour or forty-five minutes to spare so that you can make sure the instruments are all set and that you are ready to take the stage at the appointed hour. Lastly, it means that when the crowd does see you, it is as a band about to hit the stage in full playing gear, focused and keen.

### Rule 2

*Play your set to the agreed length with continuity and passion.*

As a new band, the worst thing you can ever do is overstay your welcome. Just because a crowd that doesn't know you – and is there to see someone else – loved you for six songs, does not mean they will love you for ten. Get on stage, do your thing and get the hell off. It is always better to leave a crowd baying for more and keen to see you again than for them to be waiting impatiently for you to leave the stage. If you play longer than you agreed, you will also annoy the other bands, the promoter and the management. Be nice. You are still learning, so act with humility and know your place. But remember that you are there to make friends with an audience as well. Therefore, even if there are only ten people in the crowd, hit that set like you are playing Wembley Arena. Do not take long breaks between songs to talk rubbish. Let your music talk. Play a tight, short and polished set. Make sure you repeat the band name at the beginning, middle and end of the set, clearly and LOUDLY! Sure, you can't help strings breaking, but long pauses between songs are embarrassing, avoidable and look ridiculous. Make sure you are so well rehearsed as to be able to play your set with only the shortest of breaks between songs.

### Rule 3

*This is work – conduct yourself accordingly.*

Yes music is your passion, and yes there are girls and booze and all your mates around you. But you are here to do a job. Keep focused and do that. Do not get drunk, do not try and pick up girls before the gigs, do not hang out with your mates. Keep tight with your band, stay focused and deliver the goods. The party comes after. If you want to continue gigging, you need the other bands and the promoters and club owners to think of you as reliable, professional and competent. If you are all those things, you don't even have to be any good. But if you are good as well as those things, you will walk a far easier route down this road. Yes, you may be brilliant, and maybe within six months these bands will be supporting you. That's no reason to have an arrogant attitude. This is now, and you need to behave accordingly.

### Rule 4

*Do not stay in the venue getting out of hand after your show.*

This is a tricky one. As a support band, you are obliged to stay and watch the headline act. You will learn from their show and they will see you as supportive guys who are prepared to go the whole way. If you don't stay for their show, you create the perception that you are just in it for yourselves. But this rule also means that the party doesn't start until the show is done. Spread the word that after the show the band is going to a bar or a house nearby, where the after-show party is going to happen. Invite the pretty girls or hot guys you have been eyeing out, making it clear that this is a band and friends thing,

In the mosh pit. Photo by Warren Van Rensburg



and that you are personally inviting them. It doesn't matter who comes – do it. If you want to build a credible reputation for yourselves, you can't have your bass player getting very drunk and drooling over every girl in the bar. It just isn't cool. But if you have a place to go where everyone is a friend, or is invited, you have a really great afterparty on your hands

# CHAPTER 12

## THE COUNTRY

**SOUTH**Africa does not have the biggest music industry around – in fact it is fairly underdeveloped considering the size of our population. However, it is growing, and in some areas growing fast. We have a long and proud history of music that has created some top-class stars and industry personalities, not to mention memorable international hits. Solomon Linda's 'Wimoweh' or 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight', Miriam Makeba's 'Click Song' or Clout's 'Substitute' spring to mind.

Some of the world's top record producers hail from South Africa, like Eddie Kramer (Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin), Mutt Lange, Kevin 'Caveman' Shirley and Robbie Robb. Manfred Mann was a South African, and Ricky Fataar and Blondie Chaplin, both from Durban, were members of the Beach Boys in the early '70s. Shaun Welgemoed from Seether has shown more recently that South African music has what it takes on the international scene, and Goldfish are about to show the same with dance music. Our jazz artists like Miriam Makeba, Pops Mohammed, Abdullah Ibrahim and Hugh Masekela have all proved that this country can and does produce top-class musicians. We have an enormous legacy of musical excellence, one that we should be more conscious of, and we should realise that we don't have to hold back just because of where we come from.

### WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO REALISTICALLY?

Despite the fact that we have generated so many international stars, our own industry has remained small and fragmented, and your chances of making a good living out of music

domestically are directly proportional to the genre of music that you play. This is not to say that you will certainly be successful if you play in these particular genres, but rather that, according to the existing buying patterns in this country, there are some areas that are doing much better than others.

Gospel is quite simply the biggest selling genre of music in South Africa and gospel artists have a large circuit of churches and church events to play at – and as a result a large target market. Jazz also has a very big market to appeal to and most accomplished jazz musicians are able to make some kind of living from their art. This is mainly due to the profusion of gigs available and the fact that it is quite acceptable for serious jazz musicians to be playing standards or covers of old jazz classics as part of their repertoire. Commercial Afrikaans music is one of the fastest-growing and biggest success stories of South African music. The Afrikaans music industry has typically always been strong, but since the mid '90s has ballooned massively into a highly lucrative and popular music sector.

African traditional music and what has become known as "afro-pop" are also big players in our local business. Maskanda does very well, and one only has to think of Freshlyground and Malaika to see how well afro-pop is doing. Kwaito has achieved massive radio play and cultural success, as well as record sales, but does seem to be steadily losing ground year on year to afro-pop and hip hop. After many years of struggling in this country, hip hop is undergoing a growth spurt and looking good. Most other genres in South Africa then form the bit players or fringe elements of the industry. Genres like reggae, heavy metal, punk, hard rock and pop-rock struggle to find a market. This is despite the fact that their international counterparts sell well in this country. A form of pop-rock known as "adult contemporary" bucks the trend somewhat, with artists like Prime Circle, Arno Carstens and Just Jinja doing well in the 25-and-up age-group. This is mainly thanks to regional radio stations with strong adult contemporary playlisting policies adopting them as flagship South African artists.

The local quota that was set up as an advisory level of local content for South African broadcasters does seem to have paid some dividends, although the quota percentage is clearly not high enough and allows too much content that is not music to qualify for broadcasters to fulfil their quotas. Currently the South African music quota is set at 25%. Compare this to Holland and France where it is 40% for commercial radio and African countries like Ghana which has a quota of 75% for its local music. Add to this the fact that stations are allowed to count gig guides and interviews to offset their quota. Even at 25%, this should mean that 1 in 4 songs played on the radio

Stoan from Bongo Maffin. Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**"The media is a powerful way of reaching international markets but, even though South Africans like to think we're special - which we are of course! - muscling into a crowded media space internationally is not easy."**

Diane Coetzer,  
journalist, South African correspondent  
Billboard Magazine



should be South African, which is clearly not the case.

The success of the policy thus far should definitely motivate broadcasters to go further on their own to increase local content on the South African airwaves. There are so many good reasons for this and not all of them charitable. Some just make good business sense. For a start, needle time royalties are coming into effect in South Africa. Needle time is a performance royalty that is paid to musicians who played on the recordings of works that are then performed publicly (such as radio, TV or live shows) and are separate from the compositional royalties that we have already discussed. (For more on needle time, see chapter 22.) It will definitely be cheaper for broadcasters to pay needle time royalties in rands to local artists than in dollars to overseas artists. Secondly, no one has as yet sought to own the title of being a real champion of SA music on the airwaves. Especially in the pop music arena, most stations are content to pump out international hits instead of entrenching themselves as the representatives of the best of the South African scene. The first station to effectively do this can establish itself as a major force in the business and garner plenty of respect and a powerful market position.

Domestically, who you are playing to does depend largely on what genre you are playing. While in an ideal world this would mean anyone from any background who happened to like that genre of music, this is fairly rigidly split along racial lines in South Africa, thanks to radio stations persisting in a race-based view of who likes what genre of music that has predominated since the apartheid days and seems in little hope of being changed. Luckily, the Internet and South Africa's growing international

profile means that, just because you are South African and live down here, doesn't mean you cannot reach an international market.

WHERE CAN  
YOU GO, WHAT  
IS POSSIBLE?

As we have seen, there is the opportunity for success right here in South Africa. In fact, as our industry grows, those chances for success grow more likely every year. In 2006, for the first

time ever, more local than international music CDs were sold in South Africa – a trend that has been coming for some time and one that looks likely to continue. And, if you believe that you can succeed no matter what your genre as long as you plan effectively and work hard, then your chances here are good. The trick is to remember that there are plenty of people out there who want to be famous, rich musicians. If you want to be among that number, then you have to work harder and be better than the competition in order to succeed in your goals. If you are not going to set any goals in the first place, it hardly seems fair of you to complain that you aren't rich or famous, does it?

Apart from the fact that there are several large, major record labels in South Africa, independent record labels are springing up all the time. So much so that a specific representative body, the Association of Independent Record Companies (AIRCO) was brought into being to protect the interests and rights of independents. Independent labels typically sign more artists than majors, take more chances and are more



Horn section. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

connected to the street where the music is coming from. All of this means that there are many companies out there looking for material and artists to sign.

In the modern recording environment, artists who know their business can even opt NOT to sign to a label and use the Internet and digital technology to record, distribute and sell their own music, without ever needing to share any of their money with a record company at all. Thanks to the Internet this also means that South African artists are able to generate momentum and a profile online, and access and sell to international markets, spreading the net for their sales far wider than just these borders without even leaving home.

The point about all of these options

is that, in theory at least, anything is possible. Once this is acknowledged, it is up to you to make a firm decision about what you want to achieve and commit to making it happen. You have to have the talent, of course, but more importantly you have to know where you want to go and plan ways to make that happen. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be a folk or traditional artist who never leaves your home country. If that is what you want and you act powerfully to make it happen, no one can criticise you. But if you continually say you want to break into the international market and you don't even own a passport, then you are fooling no one but yourself.

# CHAPTER 13

## RECORDING

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**THE** issue of recording is one that has shifted in importance over the years to the point where it inhabits a fairly unique space in recent times. Thanks again to the influence of the Internet and the various options it provides for publicising your music, a recording is more important than ever – even from a very early stage in a band's lifespan. Traditionally, a band would only make a recording once it had established itself fairly solidly on the live circuit and was looking to land some form of a deal or to exploit its live popularity by selling home-made records. Now that is all gone, with practice leaning more towards recording as soon as humanly possible. There are some excellent reasons for adopting this point of view, as well as some drawbacks.

What this means is that the humble demo tape has become a lot more important than ever before. With a well-recorded demo tape you can now start gathering an audience for your work, approach national and international promoters, fans, clubs and record labels directly with your music online, and even use it as a negotiation tool to make sure you get a good deal. Many bands have used Internet traffic and statistics to prove to record labels and promoters that they are worth taking a risk on. These artists are then in a far better position to negotiate a fair and equitable deal.

As to when one should be recording a demo, it has gotten to the point where a band should be looking to record as soon as it is ready to start gigging. In the past, advice would have been to hold off recording until such time as a more established set and reputation have been established, and the live set of songs debugged. However, with the ease of digital communications in the modern world and the ever-decreasing cost of recording and sound duplication, there is not as much need to hold off. In fact it is so advantageous to have a demo recording from the first show onwards that nowadays you need to make recording a demo part of the strategy for beginning to play live. This is because it is an invaluable promo tool that can be used to whip up support before playing a single note in front of an audience. Once live gigs start, those recordings become an asset to be sold in the form of CDs and downloads to a growing fan base. Everyone wants the first thing their favourite band ever recorded. If there is a change in style slightly later on or you stop playing some of the songs, in a certain sense that's even better, since the recordings capture a specific moment in time and become more desirable. But then one must also be committed to recording often and allowing this recorded history to show your development.



Blk Jks. Photo by Warren Van Rensburg

**"I get between five and thirty calls a week from artists and/or individuals who have started 'their own record label/distribution company' or 'have just finished recording an album' and want to get their album(s) into the stores. The vast majority of the callers have little understanding of how this industry works."**

Marc Latilla, group music buyer for Look & Listen





Fuzigish. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

## REGISTER YOUR MUSIC. EARN FROM YOUR MUSIC

One of the key components to making sure that you have a future in the music business, whether at home or abroad, is to make sure that you are recognised as the owner of the music you write so that you can profit from its exploitation. The first step of this is to establish yourself as the owner of the copyright on that piece and secondly, to register with an organisation to collect monies owed to you from the performance and reproduction of that music. One way that is still legally recognised is to create a CD or sheet music of your music and mail it to yourself via registered mail.

Keep the envelope unopened in a safe place. Its dating will prove exactly when you created it, thus establishing your ownership and date of creation should a dispute arise. But a far easier and beneficial method is to sign up with a local music rights administrator or collection agency such as SAMRO, SARRAL or NORM. In the last chapter we look at these options in some depth, but right now you need to know that you **MUST** assert your ownership of your work as early as possible.

Becoming a member of such an organisation is a handy tool. Not only does it assert your right to be recognised as the copyright owner of your work, but it mentally sets the idea in your head that you can earn from your music and that you are a music professional. In this way, you can start to earn from every performance of your music, be it a demo, on the radio,

or playing your own songs at gigs. It is an important revenue stream and, more importantly, means that you can assert your ownership of your work in a legally recognised way globally as well as locally.

## DEMO RECORDINGS

The demo recording is a band's primary tool of persuasion from a musical point of view. An abbreviation of "demonstration", a demo is exactly that: it gives a band the chance to strut its stuff. In other words, without having to go out to a rehearsal studio or a live show, anyone you are trying to interest in your music can simply pop a disc into a CD player or a flash stick into a computer and hear the music. It sounds really simple. Except that many artists miss the entire point of a demo recording. As the original word implies, the object is to demonstrate to the listener what it is you can do. The first cardinal sin is to record three or four songs that are very similar in style, delivery or theme. All you are thereby doing is demonstrating that you are one-dimensional and not very versatile. So, when you are thinking about making a demo recording, consider these points:

- How many songs do we record?
- What do we want this recording to say to people?
- Which of our songs do we record?
- To what purpose do we want to put this recording?
- How much do we want to spend on the recording?

When recording a demo you also need to think about preparation. Recording is expensive and the less time you spend in the actual studio laying down your song the better. Therefore you need to do what is called pre-production. What this means is that you need to work out exactly how you want the song to sound when recorded. You must make notes, for example, of what settings your amplifiers or effects pedals are on, how loud or in what tone the singer must sing etc. The idea is to be able to record the song in a form that has already been decided upon. The person who records the music, the engineer, will then later mix it together, making sure that the volume of all instruments is correct, that everything can be heard and that the overall sound level is uniform. It is only really at a more advanced stage that you would work with a producer. A producer's job is to give input into the structure of the song and how each part gets recorded. Therefore, a producer is typically very involved in your pre-production as well as the recording process.

Usually a good studio will assign one day for recording a song and one for mixing it. But if you are looking for a simpler final product, a half-day for each is also reasonable. The studio concerned will give you a quote for the time, recording and mixing, and you will receive the master of the final product from them. The recording studio should never be given any rights to this material. By paying for their services you retain all the rights to your music. Do not be tempted to give away rights in return for free recordings; this can really turn out to be a bad thing in the long run should you become successful.

The cost of recording a demo is determined by two factors: how long you take and the hourly rate of the



Sliq Angel. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

studio. You can expect to pay anything from R1 500 per day to R1 000 per hour for a studio. Obviously you need to choose a studio that meets your budget.

## DIGITAL DOWNLOADS

Once you have your recordings it is important that you put them to work for you to help get the name of your musical project out into the public eye.

One of the most effective tools that now exists to accomplish this is the digital download. Two major platforms are open to you here: the Internet and mobile phones. Bear in mind that once the public gets to know your music they are going to look for it online. As most people are fairly ignorant about the Internet and how it works, as well as being ignorant about music rights and the mechanics of copyright, they are just going to search for your music and download it when they find it. If

they do find your music online, most people are not going to pause and think about whether it is legal or not- they are simply going to download it. What this means is that if you don't make legal downloads available across a few platforms, people are going to start posting and sharing your files illegally, making you a victim of piracy. However, if you enter into agreements with legal download sites to make clips available for free and to sell legal downloads of your music, you can then make sure legal versions of your music pop up first on search engines and actually stand to benefit from this trend.

But your online demo recording can be used in other ways. If you have created a dedicated website, you can make clips available for listening purposes on your site, or you can link up with a suitable service provider to sell downloads through your own site. You can also use these songs on your MySpace profile or Facebook band fan page. In effect, your songs become digital calling cards for you on the Internet, arriving ahead of you, making

**"The landscape is definitely changing for all in this business. If anything, it's more accessible and not as controlled. The main problem is that anyone can start a band or record an album and many do, making it harder to discover the real gems amongst all the clutter."**

Marc Latilla, group music buyer for Look & Listen

friends and spreading the word. In the case of a brand new band and your first three or so songs, it is often worth giving them away as much as you can to ensure they travel as fast and as far as possible, reaching many more people than you as an artist know personally via the viral spread pattern that the Internet offers. Once again, make sure you unleash this yourself so that any queries, gig leads or business offers can come back to you, rather than discover it has been happening because an over-keen fan uploaded your songs into cyberspace. In that case, all sorts of weird things might be happening without you knowing.

In South Africa, several companies are competing keenly in the mobile phone music download market. Thankfully many of these companies understand that making a broad range of music available is imperative and they are very interested in talking to independent or new artists to add their music to their catalogues. Because carrying all this music is virtually cost-free to them, they can afford to do this

where physical CD stores can't. A list of the big mobile phone music download companies is provided in the Appendix – get in touch. Once you have your music in their systems, you must also do your part to let people know they can buy your music from these guys. You will earn a percentage of each and every sale, so it's in your interests to drive people to these systems. If they don't do it for you, also create ringtones from your songs that can be added to their ringtone downloads. Ringtones are outselling CDs hand over fist globally, so you REALLY want to be a part of that action.



The next step after making your recording and ensuring it is all over the Internet and mobile download platforms is to try and get some radio play from it. You need to handle all the digital stuff first because it will provide a track record for your band that you can use to persuade radio stations to look more favourably on your music for playlisting. The Internet being what it is and viral communications being so powerful, the chances are better than you might think that a radio employee has heard of your music before you get to the station, making your case to be heard all that more powerful. And even if they haven't, the fact that your music is out there and enjoys a fan base will make them more inclined to play it than the music out of a bedroom project that has never previously seen the light of day.

Despite this it is advisable to start off seeking radio airtime from the bottom up. Don't rush off to the major national



broadcasters first. Chances are they won't play your stuff anyway. Rather start slow and build some momentum. Keep good records of the process, and use your track record of playlisting on smaller stations to build momentum that you can use to pressurise bigger stations. The first step on the rung is campus radio.

Campus is the best place to start for a number of reasons. Firstly, their audience is young, adventurous and has a broader taste in music than that of commercial radio stations. Secondly, most of them have a strong vested interest in local music and want to support it. Use the Internet and local press to find out about campus and community radio in your area and what it is that they play (some starting points are provided in the Appendix). It is no use sending them music if you don't at least loosely fit their style. Because campus and community radio have bigger local music quotas and also more of a genuine desire to interact with local music and musicians, you can start to assemble a reasonable CV of airplay and interviews by taking the time and effort to interact with them. Remember of course that no spin of your music on air is wasted once you have registered your songs with SAMRO. In terms of the bigger picture, the more airplay you get, even on small stations, the more royalties earned off your songwriting.

Once you have this track record you should be looking to target your big regional and national radio stations, including vernacular stations if you sing in the appropriate language. Unfortunately, the format that the majority of these stations programme their music in seems to be fairly limited,

which makes it hard for more diverse musicians to get airplay. However, there is always some degree of flexibility around these musical definitions. In order to get airplay on the bigger stations, you need to follow their submissions procedure. This is not hard at all. Call the station or access their website. Find out the name of the music compiler in charge of playlisting. Once you have this, prepare your CD so that the disc itself (as well as a case of some description) bears your band's name, the song's name and length, and the publishing information. Get in touch with the compiler and ask if you can come in to the station to present some new music to them. Often they will give you a 10-minute appointment, but they might ask you just to deliver the disc if they don't know you. Take your disc, with a one-page document giving a very brief description of the group and what you do, as well as a description of the song and its style. Remember to include ALL your contact details. If you have a track record, include this as well. For example, the fact that you have played gigs with more established names, played a festival, reached number two on your campus radio chart, had three interviews on your community stations. Add any newspaper or magazine clippings you might have. Present these in a tidy and orderly document to the music compiler. One week later follow up with a phone call. Depending on whether you get a "yes", "no" or "not yet" answer, keep calling until they either tell you it is being played or it has been rejected. If you don't, your song could be on air and you wouldn't even know it!



Once your group is performing live and looking at touring or getting airplay, your best and most effective calling card is your music. We have already seen that in its digital form this can have a very long reach and help to grow your reputation. But do not rely solely on the digital domain to do this work for you. You still need to produce and sell physical CDs. There are many ways you can do this and, considering how cheaply you can make copies of your demo recording, there is no excuse not to exploit as many of them as possible.

The obvious one is gigs. Once you have your recording complete, you MUST have a person selling discs at every show. It is no good trying to sell them once your performance is over. You need someone to stand, either with the doorman selling as people enter and leave, or at a dedicated merchandise table in full view of all the patrons. If you can sell a five-track demo CD with a decent cover for around R40.00, it's R40.00 extra that you have earned for the gig, it's R40.00 back towards the cost of recording and a contribution towards the next tour or purchase the band needs to make. Make sure you have someone selling the disc who is outgoing and charming. Your stoner friend who is so shy he can't talk to strangers just won't do. You need someone who is able to grab the attention of the crowd and talk to them, even persuade them to buy. If the seller creates a good impression, that is how the buyer will remember the band.

The next golden rule is for no band

member to ever be caught without CDs. Keep five in your backpack or bag; keep a box in the boot of your car, a few in your bedroom. If someone says they have heard of the band, but they don't have the CD yet, you MUST be able to sell them one immediately. Make sure you all get into the habit of having discs with you at all times. Besides the fact that you can pick up sales this way, you never know when you are going to bump into someone influential or important. You could suddenly be introduced to someone from a big band who would like to hear your stuff, a journalist or TV producer, a night club owner or a big promoter. If you can quickly produce a disc on demand in these situations, you look more professional, you look keen and you let them know that you mean business and that you mean to succeed.

Once you have this organised, try and find out if there are other places you can leave the CD to be sold. Check out your local CD store and ask if they will take five and give you the cash once they have been sold, or even ask your local bookshop, hairdresser or corner café. A single sale means the money from that sale, but more importantly it means someone new has heard your stuff and might tell friends and support you at your next gig. Online CD stores are good ones to hit, because then you can also direct your fans from your mailing list to the online store and even link from your website to somewhere that international website visitors can buy the disc. You could do this yourself on your own website, but it's pretty tricky to accomplish without some serious back-end support.

# CHAPTER 14

## VIDEO

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video

**THERE** is an old song by a band called The Buggles, which lamented the death of radio because of the onset of TV. It's called "Video Killed The Radio Star". Not only does this demonstrate just how wrong a guy can be, but also that, while music promotion platforms change, some basic things do remain the same. So while it is true that the Internet is changing the face of the music business, to assume that things like radio singles and videos no longer matter is to be sorely mistaken. In fact, especially in the case of video, it has created a forum of such power and reach that the simple music video has become more important than ever in your arsenal of self-promotional tools.

This is another area where digital technology has radically brought down the cost of entry. In order to produce a broadcast-quality video you no longer need to spend a fortune on a TV camera, as there are relatively cheap digital broadcast-quality cameras available. What this means is that, for a fraction of the budget previously required, bands can make videos and start to take advantage of the various new platforms available. Of course at the top end very expensive video is still alive and well, but when you are starting out look into the digital cheapo option because you will be amazed at the incredible mileage you will be able to get out of it for your band.

The music video remains extraordinarily important as it is another device that gives your audience a

visual fix on who you are as an artist. Someone who has never been to one of your shows now has a chance to see what you look like, how you dress and what the group's vibe is. This means their visual recognition of you and their association with your name increases, making it more likely that they may attend a show, buy a CD or a tee shirt. In short, the more your audience recognises you, the more inclined they are to interface with what you are doing. The music video can help you achieve this in several ways.



The key player in revolutionising the effectiveness of the music video is YouTube. Thanks to this website you can upload your videos to the Internet and then link it to many, many websites. But more importantly, if your video is clever, funny, scary or anything out of the ordinary, it can get picked up on by idle viewers across the globe. The more hits your video starts to get, the more hits it will get. This kind of viral spread can splatter the name of your band around computer monitors across the globe in a matter of weeks, and of course put your tunes on the lips of all those viewers as well. So if you don't have much budget for a music video, but have access to the equipment, you might want to

Osiris. Photo by Warren Van Rensburg



**"It's actually pretty simple to keep a TV crew and producer happy. Arriving on time is a good idea and arriving with your whole band at the same time is even better! And also the whole band arriving instead of just the one who talks the most is the coolest."**

Maria McCloy, Rage Productions





Bongo Maffin. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

some time watching popular YouTube videos to see what works and tailoring your video to suit.

Over and above YouTube, your video can be uploaded onto your MySpace and Facebook profiles, which will also generate traffic and create interest in it. In fact, once the video is out on the Internet, the best thing is to just let as many people as you can know where it is. Remember while making the video that you want it to travel as far and wide as possible. So try and avoid being too self-indulgent or obscure, and think about the effect you want it to have.

## DOWNLOADS

Recently, video downloads have begun to be counted in the UK to contribute towards a song's chart progress. While this is not yet happening in South Africa, you could do well to look into getting your video onto platforms where you can sell it as a download as well, just like your songs. This is unlikely to be a South Africa platform however, seeing as our market at this stage does not sustain video downloads as a revenue generator or even an interest stream. But as part of a strategy to make as much money as possible from every activity you undertake and to spread the name of your band far and wide, this is a very good idea if you can get it set up.

## TELEVISION STATIONS

Right now South African television is providing more outlets for music videos than ever before. All of the SABC stations play videos as filler in-between shows, and they also all carry programmes that present music as part of their content plans. The same goes for eTV and Multichoice. Your challenge as an artist is once again to identify the programmes and channels that feature your kind of music and make sure you get your video to them. This is the one aspect of making and distributing a video that CAN get pretty expensive. Most programmes and channels will not accept a video unless it is on Betacam tape. Betacam tapes are not cheap. However, if you plan carefully enough, you should be able to make about 4 Betacam tapes and recycle them around each programme. You must just make sure you retrieve your tapes from each programme or channel once they have loaded it onto their systems. Also be aware that the SABC and the Multichoice channels have different preferences for the sound settings. Make sure you know whether they want the tape to be set with Dolby-on or Dolby-off before preparing your stock.

Apart from the filler flighting of videos, the reason why TV is still so important as an outlet for your video is interviews. With a good video under your belt you are far more likely to get TV interviews from programmes. This is because most shows like to use what they call cutaway footage to intersperse with interviews. Seeing as many programmes are actually made on a shoestring budget, your providing a cutaway video means this footage does

not have to be shot. Therefore, from their point of view, interviewing you will not only look good, but will also take less time and cost them less. Bear in mind of course that JUST having a video is not going to get your face on TV- you will still have to have a story behind you, and a reason to be interviewed- but once you get there, a video will make your life a whole lot easier.

In order to reach the right people at each programme you will have to do some research. Find out what shows on the various channels feature music. Then watch them and see what kind of music they feature. Most importantly, watch the end title sequence. This is so you can pick up which production house makes the show. You will need that name so that you can reach them to send in your video. Once you have the company name from the titles you will need to speak to them. Of course you won't have a name necessarily, but the trick is to ask for the production manager on the show. This is the person that coordinates all the shoots, interviews and crews, and they will definitely know who the right person is to send the video to. Again, do not just drop off a video. Make sure you have a name and that you have spoken to them before you deliver. Also make sure that they agree to give you the tape back once they have used it. When delivering, make it into a package and include a copy of your demo CD, a disc with photos on it, a printout of your biography and again, any press clippings you might have of the band. This is so that the programme knows whether they can take you seriously or not and gives them material to work from so that they can interview you properly should they decide to.

# CHAPTER 15

## THE INTERNET

**WE** have touched on many of the issues that arise from and around the Internet in many places in this book already. However, the Internet is becoming such a powerful tool that it deserves this chapter all of its own so that we can explore these ideas in more depth. The popular understanding is that if you leverage your music and your band presence effectively enough online, you actually don't need a record label to sell your music and make a living. Theoretically this is true. All the mechanisms to market and distribute your music are available online. The downfall is that you have to do it ALL yourself. And while this may at first sound simple and easy, the bigger it gets the more complex it gets. In my experience of bands, they are most often not equipped to handle the complexity and intensity of looking after their own business. This is, after all, why managers were invented in the first place. But if the band or a manager can master the basics, you can certainly utilise this amazing tool to your best advantage and, if not actually put yourself in a position where you can sell your music without a label, certainly put yourself in a very strong bargaining position so that you can get a deal out of a label that is the most helpful to you and contains the least onerous obligations.

The key to successful use of the Internet by musicians is knowledge and proactive behaviour. You have to know what is available, where you can go and

why. You have to be proactive, move fast and use whatever tools you can to keep one step ahead of the game. The Internet is a dynamic and fast-changing environment. It is not enough to merely put up a website and hope for the best. Look how Facebook totally superseded MySpace in about a year. This will continue to happen all the time. So make sure you are online a lot, keeping up to date and working the thing. Otherwise, it simply won't work for you.

The key approach to have is one of dynamism. Make sure you have a lot to say and that you keep your online content updated often. This doesn't necessarily mean posting a new song or a new video every second day, but it does mean keeping your online platforms busy with gig updates, news, opinion pieces, links and what have you. As we go on to explore the various options below, keep in mind the idea of a living, constantly changing environment where you can grow a community of fans by being continuously active.



Due to the advent of free social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, there is some debate as to whether a band actually needs a dedicated website

anymore. It costs money and labour to maintain and is harder for fans to find than the social networking pages are. The thing about a dedicated website is that you can control every single aspect of it, you can use it to recruit members to a database, you can monitor exactly how many visitors you get and most importantly, you can change it entirely at any time.

As discussed earlier, there is some information that simply **MUST** be on your website: the band bio, a discography, contact details and gig details. But this is really the bare minimum that you need to justify a site's existence. A news page is a very important addition to this list. This is a place where you can announce new gigs in a story format – that is, with a press release. You can also announce sponsorship deals, tours, video shoots, and recording sessions. In fact, anything you like. You can even use the news page as a kind of letters page where members of the band take it in turns to write up reports on gigs. This is a really cool thing to do because it gives fans insight into the personal workings of the band and develops a stronger sense of relationship between your audience and the band. So when you have been out of town in particular, it's a good idea to get one band member to review the shows, say what was cool, thank people and generally have a few words to say about the shows.

Once you are getting good traffic to your site, your next task is to keep them coming back. One highly effective way to do this is to set up the site with a newsletter and to aggressively drive your visitors to become members. This means the sign-up for the newsletter must be very visible on every page. You can motivate viewers to sign up by having an ongoing competition where

Suicide Kings. Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**"The digital age and Internet have revolutionised the music business. For better or for worse, whatever you think, there is no going back and things have changed."**

Jay Bones, Fuzigish and Rambling Bones



once a week you choose two random newsletter members to get into the next gig for free, or give away stickers or something else easy but desirable. You want people to sign up for the newsletter for two main reasons. Firstly, you want to build up a database of email addresses so that you can send information about gigs, merchandise, your recordings and so on to as many people as possible. Secondly, you want to use the newsletter as a mechanism for getting people back to the site as often as possible. Once you start getting large volumes of traffic to your site, you will start to see more happening commercially. That is to say, if you have things to sell on your site, you will only really start to see sales happening once you achieve a decent level of traffic. Your newsletter is a prime way of achieving these traffic levels. Send it out once a week, with links back to pages on the site where you have made updates such as: news, gigs, new photos, a YouTube video etc.

Of course this implies that your readers can actually buy stuff off your site. This is where your digital strategy from the previous chapter kicks in. Your own official band site MUST offer your goods for sale, whether as digital downloads, physical CDs or merchandise that your fans can buy. Make sure you put mechanisms in place so that you can link to an online retailer to sell your goods. This can effectively turn into passive income for your band, but it requires dedicated planning and forethought to achieve. Unless you have the contacts and the knowledge to implement a really good site that can justify itself by generating a lot of traffic and actual sales, you may be better off using the free social networking options.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

MySpace and Facebook are of course the two prime examples of social networking sites that spring to mind, but there are others. Sites like Twitter already exist and considering the

rate of change in this arena, it is likely that soon others will follow. Social networking sites provide platforms for people to easily stay in touch online and exchange social information about events, people and matters of shared interest. For a musical entity they are very attractive because of the viral nature of these sites: merely by being active on them you will attract attention to yourself through your own activity and the activity of the friends you will make here.

Here, instead of trying to recruit faceless visitors to your site, the object is to gain as many friends as possible for your band. Think of it like gaining subscribers to your email newsletter. Because all your activity shows up on the pages of your friends as well, their friends get to see your name and will probably look into finding out more about you. Each time you gain new friends on these sites you gain access to their groups of friends, which opens the potential of growing your friends exponentially. While the mechanics of self-promotion on each of these platforms may differ substantially, the methodology you need to employ will not. Just as with your own website you need to keep active so that you are visible and interesting. But don't get too carried away on these sites. More than one message per week will start to alienate your friends here, who will begin to perceive your barrage of



Battle Of The Bands. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

information as spam. Remember, not everything you post onto your profile needs to be confirmed with a message – your friends will see the change as a bulletin on their profiles anyway. Otherwise make use of the notification system and the event invitation systems to keep in touch with your friend base. As with any website, keep your profile up to date with fresh news, photos, video clips and music.

This is a time-consuming activity, and it is very easy to get sidetracked. In order to keep on top of your social networking profile, you should be allocating at least some time each day. In fact, as a serious band, to allocate one hour of each day for replying to messages, upkeep of websites and general keeping in touch is not unreasonable. If you rotate that hour per day across all your band members, then it is not too onerous. It also has the

advantage of making sure that everyone knows how to use the sites and is up to date with what is happening out there. If you are serious about gaining a good, loyal following, you have to stay in communication with them and not treat them like a mailing list that you only talk to once you have some news or a gig you want them to come to. Also, from an international perspective, you will only start to get good penetration into an international market once your footprint on the web becomes pretty high. This means you need to show plenty of activity, your name needs to come up in a lot of search engine results and so on. So you have to work it. Of course, your own website and social networking sites alone will not be enough to get your name up in search lists. For that you have to be on more websites as well, but that can be done just as easily.

## INTERNATIONAL MUSIC SITES

Just as there are specialised music and music news sites in South Africa, there are plenty internationally. Spend some time surfing the net looking for these

and bookmark them. Then read them regularly to see what sort of music they are into and how their news is presented. Also make sure you trace the contact details of the news editor for the site using the contacts section of the website. Then, just as you would with your South African media, start sending them your news releases. Try and see if they will link to your official band page, and make sure you have a link back to them already up. If they have a member system, join up so that you receive their newsletter and updates. If they have a band section, make sure you sign up for it, load your band profile, pics and music. Try and get your information onto as many sites like this as possible in the international market. The more sites your band name appears on, the more highly your name will come up in international keyword searches by web users. And the higher you rank in those searches, the more likely international surfers are to actually click on the name and read about you.

Once again, this is a time consuming and fairly slow process. One that requires constant attention. It requires dedicated time, a plan and real intent to reach an international market. Sites like mp3.com and garageband.com have content from all over the world and it is hard to become visible through the clutter. However, by remaining active, updating regularly and replying to all messages, making friends and

sending out information, you will begin to develop a profile and make some headway. The trick is to be patient and remember always that any friends you make outside of our borders are important.

## DOWNLOADS

In this section I am referring to legal downloads of music. These can be both downloads that are free and ones that are sold. As mentioned earlier,

if fans are looking for your music they are going to search for it online with a search engine. When the results come up, they are going to click on the first one that looks likely, find your song and download it. They are not going to think too hard about whether that download is legal or not, because their objective is merely to obtain your music, not to worry about the legality. In order to make sure that your music is not pirated a lot online and that you can also benefit from the digital footprint you are establishing, you absolutely have to make sure that your music is available legally in as many places as possible. Your own website and social networking pages are the best place to start. Here you will most likely put a couple of sample songs that you give away for free, as you would with your video on YouTube. It is advisable to use those same few songs as free giveaways on the other sites that you may join up with as well. So when you join mp3.com and garageband.com, use the same three songs as you have on your profile.

In this way you can get as much mileage as possible out of free

downloads without giving away too much music. Keep the rest of your material for sites that will help you sell your material online. Many big sites will not deal directly with individual bands. Organisations like iTunes, Yahoo Music and IODA (Independent Online Digital Aggregator) will only deal with record labels. However, some organisations, like CD Baby, will allow bands to register their music with them for a small fee, open an account to sell their downloads and also assist with distributing their music to other download sites using their own network.

It is therefore an excellent idea to investigate as many digital online music retailers as possible and find out how many will take your music without an intermediary like a record label. CD Baby only charges a \$35 fee and then your music is available globally online. The best advice is for you to do your own research on-site, although in our Appendix section, you will find some recommended solutions as well. Digital deals are generally non-exclusive, which means you can sell your music on more than one website. If anyone tries to tie you into an exclusive deal to sell your music online, refuse!

Downloads are very important to the modern musician in a number of ways. Firstly, they help establish your name and reputation both locally and internationally. The files are easy to share and word tends to spread virally from one downloader to the next. If it so happens that your music fits in with the trend of a group of downloaders, they will be recommending your sound to each other very quickly. In other words, they are a great marketing tool. Secondly, once you are able to sell downloads, they become another stream of income for your group. Yes you do have to maintain the

HHP Band. Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**"Probably the most important asset that any band can have is the list. Some people call them fans, but I call them punters (the word fan just does not work for me). An email or phone list that slowly builds up with all those people that like your style and outlook in it."**

Jay Bones, Fuzigish and Rambling Bones





Dave Baudains (New Academics). Photo by Kevin S. Flee

**"Let's talk Internet radio or podcasts. This is super exciting and if you do not know what I am talking about look it up. All artists should be looking at ways of getting their music onto podcasts and Internet radio. It is a growing, dedicated, targeted audience and much more exciting than the propaganda that has been pumped down the airwaves currently. The listener has the power and choice. Maybe your average person does not like choice, but I sure as hell do!"**

Jay Bones, Fuzigish and Rambling Bones

information flow to keep your online presence alive, but you can fairly passively earn from the music you have recorded once you establish the demand for it online. Thirdly, it is important because it provides a measurable and trackable record of your progress as an entity. Each download made, each song purchased online is recorded. You must make sure that you have access to the stats of every place where your songs are. This will give you an accurate idea of how your popularity is rising, or not! The statistics that you can pull from these sites will show you, as well as any other observer, whether your reputation is increasing, as demonstrated by downloads and page impressions, or whether you are treading water or even losing ground. This information can be used in many ways.

By sharing your online stats, you can convince media and the public that you are worth looking into, even if they don't know you. You can use it to persuade investors to assist you financially, record companies to think about picking up your album, bigger download sites to feature your music. Basically, by starting to do well, you can use your statistical online reporting to help yourself do even better. So keep a sharp eye on your online statistics. They

will tell you when what you are doing is working and they can also be used to tell others of your success in your publicity and press releases, thus fuelling the fires.

In short, the online environment requires constant attention, and strategic forethought and planning. But these sites are designed to be very user-friendly and accessible to maximise their impact, so anyone can learn to interact with them. As with everything you undertake as a band, make sure that you first have a clear understanding of what it is that you hope to achieve and pursue your goal thoroughly. Keep your presence fresh and up to date, and do not neglect the friends you make online. Keeping relationships going with international sites, people and organisations is known as digitally calling ahead. If you intend to one day physically head out into the world, you must make sure that you have created and cemented relationships that you can rely on. This also means that you must make sure that your digital activity has resulted in a solid reputation and a voice that people know and react to. Don't be shy with your online stats. They could mean the difference between support from unexpected sources and not being able to leave home.

# CHAPTER 16

## MERCHANDISE

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merchandise

**ONE** of the key business attitudes that musicians and groups often lack is the idea of making money from all the possible avenues that exist around them. By this I mean that musicians are often so focused on music that they do not see the host of opportunities that exist around their activities as a performer. The idea is to look carefully at the situation and take every opportunity to earn money off the activity you undertake as an artist. One of these opportunities is merchandising.

What is merchandise? Well, loosely, merchandise, or “merch” as it is commonly known, is a collection of products that are associated with your musical endeavour that you can sell. This means that, strictly speaking, your recordings are merchandise. As are your music videos. But in particular here I am referring to other products that a band can easily generate and then use to both further its reputation and earn more money. The kinds of things that artists traditionally create as merchandise include the following: stickers, badges (buttons), tee shirts, caps, beanies, hoodies, belt buckles, socks, fabric patches, posters, money clips, wallets, CD pouches.

In short, anything that you can put your band logo on and then sell as a desirable object to your fan base becomes merchandise. The trick is to identify items of clothing or accessories that would appeal to the market you are catering for with your music and create merchandise that is in line with this.

### WHY MERCHANDISE

So we have briefly seen what merchandise is. Now you need to understand why you would want to create merchandise. Obviously it takes money to create and that money needs to come from the band. Why would you spend your money on extra items that you then have to sell?

Well, there are several very good reasons for merchandising. The biggest one is that, as a musician in the 21st century, it is not as easy as it used to be to make money from your music recordings. Up until quite recently, physical music sales have often been seen as the main way that many artists have made their money. Now in South Africa our audience is much smaller and CD buying is not a huge habit. Combine that with the fact that the market is changing both here and globally and you will begin to realise that in order to make a decent living out of the activity of making music, you DO need to make sure you can earn money in many different ways.

The second reason is that merchandise items with your name all over them are very good marketing tools for you. Every time a kid walks around town with your logo on her chest, people are seeing the name. Her friends and family are becoming acquainted with it. She becomes a walking billboard for you and your



Merchandise. Photo by David Chislett

**“Most bands don’t seem to understand what a good source of income merch can be for them. For a lot of new bands you can often make more money from selling merch (if you have the right stuff) than you will from the door. BUT you’ve got to be clever and know what you are doing.”**

Roy Potteril, Bam Bam Merchandising



band. And what is more, she paid YOU for the privilege, not the other way round as you would expect. This is why it is wise to look at a range of different and exciting items to create. Every band has a tee shirt. If your stuff is different and more exciting, people will be more inclined to buy it and actually wear it in public.

Basically a band should be putting aside its money from its earnings to be able to start creating merchandise. This is so that you can earn more from each gig than just your door takings. You can sell a tee shirt for between R80 and R100. If you print a decent number at a time, they should cost you between R30 and R40 per shirt. You make R40 – R70 profit per shirt. Badges you can make for R2.50 and sell for R5 and so on. Yes there is a financial risk, but the profit margins involved, plus the marketing benefits, combine to make this a very necessary activity for you to undertake in order to support your music. If you are making R50 profit per shirt and you sell ten at a gig, you just made R500 extra on the night. If you can do that with all the other merchandise, and your CD sales AND your door takings every night, you will soon see that merch sales can easily turn an average take at the door into a good one.

## WHEN SHOULD YOU CREATE MERCHANDISE?

never too soon to start creating your

How long is a piece of string? If you are serious about your band and intend to be in the business for the long haul and actually make a career out of it, it is

merchandise. Do it as soon as the band can afford to. Because merchandise is such a good marketing tool and because it can also assist with your earnings, it is a perfectly acceptable idea to start producing it as soon as you can. Of course make sure that you have the name of your band or group finalised first, so that you don't have to change it and throw all your merch away after two weeks!

There are several ways in which you can finance your merchandise. Firstly, get in touch with tee shirt printers or manufacturers, find out what range of products they make and their prices. Make sure you find out prices for a wide range of numbers. That is, for runs of 10, 20, 50 and 100. Once you know how much it is going to cost you, you need to think about the money. The first way is for the band to put aside money earned from gigs and so on, until you have enough money to make the goods. This is a wise way of doing it because then no one loses any money, there is no risk and the merchandise that is sold becomes pure profit in a sense, because all the money comes back into the band. However, if you are in a hurry to get going, or if the need to earn revenue is immediate, you can look into other avenues.

One method that many bands have used is that one band member who has a good job, or whose brother, parent or good friend has the cash to put out upfront, pays for the merchandise to be made. What then happens is that, until the manufacturing costs have been covered, all monies earned from merch go back to that person. Once the goods are paid off, all the money then goes to the band. This method really helps if you are struggling to get going and need a hand up. But also remember that if you are struggling to get going in the first



Festival audience. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

place, it is going to be hard for you to earn the money to pay this loan back. So think hard and plan carefully before you decide to go this route. Merch is important, but you don't want to get yourselves into debt over it!

Then the question of how to create your merch raises its head. The best thing to do is talk to other bands that have already created some. Find out the name of the person who printed their shirts or made their badges, and see if they will tell you their cost prices. Speak to several bands and find out if there is more than one supplier. Then get in touch with these suppliers and do a cost comparison. You will find that tee shirts can range in price from around R10 per shirt up to R30. But the R10 ones are very thin and simply don't last. The trick is to be realistic about how

much you can sell shirts for and not greedy about your profit margin. Just as merch is good advertising for you, you need it to be good value for your fans as well. Word will get round very fast if you make R10 shirts that fall apart after three washes and lose the logo. And then you will sell nothing. So make sure you learn about the difference in the quality of fabrics and source more than one quote before you start buying materials.

You also need to consider design issues carefully. Once you start creating merchandise you are putting your name and your logo and faces out in the public eye. It is a wise idea to have a unified trend across all the merch you make. So if you do make shirts first, think about what you want badges to look like. Is the idea you are using on



Festival audience. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

the shirts adaptable to a badge? And so on. Keep your options open and don't just run off and do things before thinking about what needs to come next. Also remember that your fans are both male and FEMALE. Girls may not like wearing big, baggy tee shirts, so make sure you get girls' shirts made as well. And make sure that your merch targets women just as effectively as men. This is because it seems that girls are more inclined to buy merch than men are. Women are less likely to spend all their money at the bar and therefore have cash. They are also more likely to want to show their support by buying your goods. It doesn't matter whether you are a group of men or women, appealing to either sex, it is important to remember that fans come in all shapes and sizes. So make sure that you

have girls' tee shirts and that your hats, buttons and badges also appeal to both male and female sensibilities. You will sell more, I assure you.



The simple rule with merchandise is to only make as much as you can afford. Just because you can get shirts made and printed for R10 per unit cheaper if you do 2 000, don't do that. It will take forever for a new band to sell 2 000 shirts. Remember that while you are going to make money off these shirts, they are a marketing tool and the band needs to be around



to benefit from that marketing. Also, your look and your sound are growing and changing all the time. In two years' time, you don't want to be selling the same old tee shirt design. Times and fashions will change, and so will your band. Smaller runs are perfect because there is less financial risk, you don't end up with old stock that is unfashionable and you can keep trying new things to

**"The trick is to think of your band as a brand. You need to have these extra things to sell because they act as good marketing materials for you outside of gigs. Of course, they also earn you money, or at the very least pay for themselves."**

Roy Potteril, Bam Bam Merchandising

keep it interesting for your fans.

Don't take all your stock to every show you play either. It just puts you at risk of theft, loss and careless giveaways. Rather, take five of each size to each show, and 10 or so CDs. You will soon see from one show to the next how much stuff you actually sell. Carry only slightly more stock with you than you know you can realistically sell. If you are taking the merchandise angle

seriously, you also need to make sure you have a reliable honest, and hard-working salesperson who handles your stuff.

A good merch person is worth his or her weight in cash money. I have seen a good merchandise salesperson turn so many "maybe" sales into actual items sold, that a band is prepared to tour with her and pay for her accommodation and food. The best is to incentivise the salesperson with a percentage of the sale. So instead of giving the salesperson a miserly R100 for a night of standing around trying to sell shirts, give him 15% of whatever he sells so that he can write his own paycheck. At R100, 10 tee shirt sales gives him R150 for the night. And the more merch you have on offer, the more he can make. You don't need someone super-cool looking to do this. You need someone who is friendly, outgoing and persuasive; someone who knows the band well, and knows the merchandise better; a person who is charming, calm and genuine. Remember you are playing in bars and nightclubs mainly, so she also needs to be of sober habits, not nervous and able to deal with people of all types and levels of sobriety.

With adequate and sensible planning, merchandise can become a massive asset to your group, in both the financial and marketing sense. But if you don't plan it well and thoroughly, it can be a millstone around your neck that you never sell and which you lose money over. Be sensible. You don't get merch just because everyone else has it. You get merch because you can use it to further yourselves. Remember that once you have these things you can also use them as giveaways and prizes to increase people's desire to see you and to reward your loyal fans.



# CHAPTER 17

## MANAGEMENT

**THE** question of whether a band needs management and, if so, when, is one that many, many artists and managers have argued over for decades. Traditionally a band has only really needed a manager once it has started to deal with a record label and release material. But once again in the face of the changes sweeping the global music industry, this has changed. If you are serious about making a career out of playing music and intend to start doing so with the band you are currently in, or are forming, then you need a manager. A manager is a signal of intent to the world and demonstrates that you mean business.

Part of the body of modern musical myths that every musician has to deal with is the idea that signing up a manager is risky and that you might get ripped off. The history of popular music is rife with such examples and much focus is placed on those examples. The truth of the matter is that mostly, musicians band together in a group simply to play music. As a result, the attitude of these groups is far from businesslike and their approaches to business are often not coherent or logically arranged. It therefore often takes an outside agent to impose on the musical vision a business vision that supports and complements the musical activity. As a band member, it is hard to do this as you are so submerged in the music and the ideas of the band that it is difficult to step out of that space to look at other issues pertaining

to business. Furthermore, if you as an artist know what it is that managers are supposed to do and you enter into a transparent and clear agreement, you can control them and their activity with ease. It is only when one blindly signs away rights and properties and when one enters into agreements that one doesn't understand that one is liable to get into large amounts of difficulty. That is a situation this book is designed to help you avoid – when entering into financial agreements knowledge is literally power.

Once you understand what it is that a manager does, and where his or her responsibilities lie, you can begin to see whether yours is doing a good job and if you are being ripped off or not. Despite the fact that your manager becomes the business face of your group, sight should never be lost of the fact that the manager works for you. In other words, his task is to enable your vision and your dream, using his skills, and being rewarded for his work with a percentage of your earnings. If you do not enforce a vision or a direction on your manager, then the roles are reversed and, perversely, you start to work for him. As a creative individual hoping to live out your life's dream, why would you surrender that? Yet so many bands do and inevitably end up complaining terribly about their management. Just as you would never surrender control of your songwriting to your band manager, you must also remain in control of the vision and



Jeff Strodl (Myepicvice) and Bill Botes. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

**"These days a band has to have a manager if it wants to be successful. In the South African arena you should be looking for a manager to handle all business-related issues for you as an artist and, when necessary, personal issues. A good manager should also be able to help with direction and advice on musical direction."**

Roy Harman, manager, Respect Music



Skwatta Kamp. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

direction of your band. Management is there to advise, guide and facilitate business, not create vision and direction for you. I suggest that if you are so rudderless as to need that input from an outside force, you might deserve the rewards you get and that therefore your manager is entitled to earning a lot more than the normal percentage. If you give away control, you also give away money.

have done it. But it's not whether you can; it's whether you want to. As soon as you get management in, you commit to sharing all revenue generated with that individual, you have an extra party with input into your affairs, and you take your affairs from being a creative project among friends and peers to being a business exercise that includes an outside professional. These are big changes and ones that you need to be sure that you are ready to undertake. However, there are some compelling reasons not to self-manage and rather to find an individual who does manage bands to help you get where you want to go.

What most often happens in self-managed bands is that a power imbalance starts to grow within the band that can end in conflict and the break up of the band. Because the role of a manager is so much more than booking gigs and knowing where

**MANAGER OR NO?**  
So do you really need a manager? If you are organised, have a vision, have business skills within the band and don't really want to give away revenue, well, at the end of the day, it is perfectly okay to run your own affairs and many musicians

and when you have to be places, it can create tension. For example, your internal manager also becomes the person who makes sure you are not late, that things are done well and on time. In effect, suddenly one of the band members is the boss of the others. This is guaranteed to create friction. It also seems to encourage the other band members to become lazy and to leave all the business direction to this one individual, which later causes them all to resent him or her.

The effect of this is to disrupt the unity of purpose the band has around creativity and its internal cohesion as a live unit. If one person has his or her head out the box all the time, thinking business, it will affect the way you think collectively as a creative unit. Then in a musical sense that person becomes a passenger on your train, just as in a business sense, the band then becomes a passenger on the business train.

If you are serious about making inroads into the industry and starting a full-time career in the music business, I believe that you have to have a manager. The skill set of managers is very different to that of musicians: their point of view is different and their objectives as well. And these are all good differences and skills that you need to advance in the complex web that is your industry. It is often not easy to find a good, suitable manager, but you must persevere and look hard. Remember that you need someone with a good business head who understands the creative arts and is not easily fooled or bullied. If you are serious about creating music, do you really want to spend an ever-increasing amount of time negotiating with nightclubs, record labels and newspapers to look after your live shows and your record deal, or do you want to spend that time creating

music? Most musicians will answer that they want to create music. But we are all so scared of being taken advantage of that often we try to do both. Make sure you have a solid agreement in place with your manager, that you agree to goals that can be monitored, and make sure you have access to information like bank balances. These are the kinds of things you can do to make sure you are not being taken advantage of and that you maintain a say in your own business affairs.

However, if you are a brand new band, don't just rush off and get yourselves a manager before you have earned a cent or played a single show. It will be an important learning curve for you to book some of your own shows and submerge yourselves in the business before taking on a manager. Firstly, it gives you direct experience of some of the tasks that a manager will undertake, so you will know what you are asking her to do for you, and will also be far better able to tell if she is doing a good job of it. Secondly, you need to develop an idea of how much you can earn as a band. If a manager is not going to increase your earnings by at least the percentage he will take as his fee, why employ him? And if you have not been running your own affairs for a bit, how will you know? Basically what I am suggesting is doing your own management for a period so that you can establish a benchmark against which any new manager can be measured. If they perform, keep them, if they don't, ditch them fast!





Marc Bentel. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

**"The most important part of a manager's job is to be there for an artist when they need him/her. Otherwise, to maintain revenue earnings, as it's a job at the end of the day."**

Roy Harman, manager, Respect Music

## WHAT DOES A MANAGER DO?

This is a question that has about as many answers as people you ask. In an ideal world, where a large amount of business is conducted, artist managers are the people who handle the real business relations. They head up a team of people that include a booking agent, a publicist and a road manager, and may include more. They are the people who coordinate all of these activities as well as liaising with the record label, the merchandise producers, promoters and other managers. However, if you are a small band and in a small industry like ours, your manager tends to be your publicist, your booking agent, promoter, business manager and road manager all in one. It is because of various areas of activities exist, that forming a clear understanding of responsibility with any potential manager becomes so important.

Here is what a manager can offer:

### Direction and advice

As someone with some business acumen and knowledge of the music industry, your manager is in a great position to give the band advice on direction, business ideas, creativity and strategy. This does not mean you should be letting or asking your manager to create your strategy for you, or to basically take all these decisions in these areas. What it means is that, as part of a business collective, your manager should be a valuable part of all your thinking and planning. Precisely because this individual tends not to be a musician himself, he will bring a different perspective to yours, as well

as a range of experience. That can only add to the sum of knowledge within the band.

### Neutral ear

Again, as an individual not linked directly to the creative process of making your music, your manager can act as a neutral ear. This means she can give feedback and reactions to musical conflicts that might not be resolvable within the band. If you are battling with a song and there are opposing points of view within the band, as someone who doesn't have a vested interest in one answer or another, your manager can provide an unbiased point of view that looks at what works best for the song as opposed to one or other of the band members. Also, your band manager can often give excellent input into your songs and performance. As her point of view is directed at business and financial success, she will often be able to make suggestions that are aimed at making you more accessible to the public. Often these ideas will not be popular with your band. But if you have an understanding that certain compromises can be made in order to get your career further down the road and to make a bit more money, it is always a good idea to bear these concerns in mind. Not all managers have the kind of music industry knowledge that such input requires, however. So again, this is a point that should be discussed at length and form part of your agreement with your management.

### Booking

In the South African industry, the most well-known occupation of a manager is that of booking agent. Your manager must know how to book gigs, how to plan a tour and how to negotiate

the best deal for your band. He must also know how to make sure your technical requirements are met, that the PA and sound engineer are available on the night and that support band information is taken care of. As we saw in chapter 11, it is best to use a checklist or a booking confirmation sheet with all your requirements entered on it so that your manager knows what you expect and also what to do. Then, once the show is booked, everyone in the band knows exactly what has been agreed to.

### Publicity

It is not generally enough for a manager just to make sure shows are booked. A good manager also needs to take care of making sure that the public knows about these shows. This includes sending gig information to free listings on radio, TV, the Internet and newspapers, and making sure that the web page is updated, that the database receives an email or SMS and so on. However, whether your manager acts as a full-time publicist on your behalf or not is something that needs to be agreed on upfront. Often managers are stronger in some areas than in others. For example, some are very good with logistics and technical issues, others better with media and publicity. A publicist looks after ALL your publicity needs, which includes setting up interviews, sending your music to radio, getting videos to TV and writing and distributing press releases. This is not a function that most managers will offer as part of the deal. If you require it, make sure you negotiate for it. And also be aware that, while your manager will probably do as much as is in her power to market your gigs via publicity channels, this is often where that responsibility stops. If you want more,

ask for it, agree to specific outputs and keep an eye on the situation.

### Road managing

One of the other key management functions that South Africans are used to is that of road managing. This is the term used to refer to what most managers do when they attend any live show by their clients. Road managing basically means making sure everything happens as it should at a gig. In other words, making sure that the band is on time for soundcheck, that soundcheck proceeds satisfactorily, that the door opens when it should, that the correct money is being taken at the door, that the first band goes on when it should and only plays as long as it should, and that their band gets on stage on time and sticks to its time frame. They will also make sure all the kit is removed from the venue and take the money from the promoter/club manager at the end of the night. This is something that managers of all smaller bands in South Africa do and yours must do the same. The manager in this context is your buffer between the band and everyone else.

If on the night of a gig the band is unhappy with its treatment, the facilities or what have you, it is the manager's job to sort it out. He must handle money disputes, time arrangements and so on, not the band. In this context it is the manager's job to be the bad guy, so that the band can focus on the job at hand and deliver its set to the best of its ability. Only once your band gets to be truly big would you consider having a separate road manager who would do these things for you.

### Record company liaison

Now in the beginning you're not going to have a record deal. In fact, in our

modern environment, there is a chance you may never have a record deal at all. But it is always your manager's job to handle the business around your recordings for you. Whether it is liaising with a label or with the websites offering your downloads, it is your manager's job to make sure your financial interests are looked after, that you are getting the money you are owed and that you know where you stand. If you are manufacturing

**"As you grow as an artist, you need to be taken seriously in the business. While it remains an artist's choice whether HE OR SHE wants a manager, it is advisable to have management once YOU are developed and established. You can tell a good manager by looking at an artist's growth over several years as well as year on year revenue increases (just like an other business)."**

Roy Harman, manager, Respect Music

your own CDs and selling them, your manager needs to be keeping a firm eye on the finances involved there.

This is another specific area where, as a band, you must be briefing your manager clearly and carefully as to what you want done and how. Otherwise the manager is going to do as she sees fit. You may not always agree with what



HHP. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

chance: have a proper discussion around the music product issues and make sure you know what you expect and that your manager understands that as well.

### Business management

This refers to everything that your band undertakes. Management should act as an overall coordinating force in your band to make sure that everything that needs to happen does so effectively and efficiently. So if you have someone in the band who is responsible for the banking, the manager needs to be coordinating that person. The manager needs to know how much is being spent on merch and how much is coming back in, how much is being earned from record sales and what was earned at the last gig. It is his job to look after the financial well-being of the band and to plan ahead according to your resources, to facilitate your vision and realise your goals. If you don't give your manager vision or goals, he is going to struggle to use the resources available to take you anywhere.

Never fall into the trap of just assuming that, because this person is now your manager, you can now take your eye off the horizon and leave everything up to him. Your manager works for you, doing the work you can't or shouldn't do. Therefore, you need to make sure that you always know what is going on and that in fact, from a directional and motivational point of view, you remain in control of your own band. In many cases, artists are so thrilled to have a manager, they cease thinking about these issues entirely. What generally happens then is that management either gets fed up and leaves, or takes the band over and starts making it serve his own agendas. Whose fault is this in both cases? The band's. You must have your vision and your goals firmly entrenched in everything your management does. Yes, he may be more experienced than you, know more people and be more sophisticated businesswise, but if he does not apply this to the goals of the band, all you are going to end up with is an empty career that is nothing like you wanted.



# CHAPTER 18

## NETWORKING

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**STRICTLY** speaking, networking could fit in under any of the sections in this book dedicated to marketing or business. However, I consider this particular skill to be of such importance that I have given it its own small chapter. Once you have crossed the line from wanting to be a musician to doing it, even on a very small scale, networking becomes the single most important business weapon you can possibly own. It is something that you probably do unconsciously already, but that, with conscious effort and forethought, can really help you further your career and open some interesting doors.

So what is this arcane art? Simply put, networking is the ability to see potential in relationships and to actively work with the people that you know in order to facilitate better business relationships. Good networking involves actively meeting new people, discovering what their work is and remembering that. It also means that you must establish a means of maintaining contact with new people that you have met so that the relationships can be extended. Don't, however, mistake networking with making new friends. While there is a chance that you may end up being friends with many of your new contacts, always maintain the idea in your mind that this is a business activity and remember your objective: to meet and establish contact with the kind of people who might be able to assist in

moving your band forwards faster.

As an emerging talent on the music scene, who do you want to be networking with? Well, let's bear in mind here what you are doing. As a new band that wants to get ahead, you need to be making sure you come into contact with the kind of people who can help you along and make a real difference to your career. Thankfully this is a pretty large pool of people, as there are so many different fields that can be of help to musicians. Firstly, you need to make contact with other musicians. Your fellow players are also gigging, and know other bands, the clubs – maybe record label executives and the media. Establishing strong relationships with your fellow bands means that you have a bigger pool of shared information and potential partners to set up gigs with and create a wave front of awareness with. Bear in mind that while one brilliant new band is going to get noticed, an entire cluster of bands moving forward together can generate a lot more momentum. Don't begrudge your fellow artists whatever success they are enjoying: it can become part of a momentum that will assist in propelling YOU forward as well.

The music scene is also a small one and no one likes a band that insists on being aloof and does not befriend the other acts out there. These other acts are the people in this world best-placed to understand the challenges you face and to share information with you about overcoming those challenges.



Bloodline. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

**"To me, networking has been the most important tool in navigating the music industry, especially when starting out. Although ten or so years later in the business, it's still just as important an aspect of running my business effectively."**

Eric Motloun, agent, manager, promoter



Suicide Kings. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

Get to know them and help them, and they will help you.

This leads on to the other grouping of people you must get to know well: club owners, booking agents and other band managers. These are tactical relationships that you need to establish for later. The longer this group of people has known you, and been acquainted with your artist name and profile, the better it will go for you once you need to start calling them for booking and business purposes. Part of the process of building momentum for your act is to make sure that within the industry your name is becoming known. What many people don't realise is that this can be achieved most effectively by talking directly to others in the business. A band or artist name that is well known by other artists and music industry professionals will circulate faster than one that isn't. This is because these people are in the centre of the world you want to be in and

they all know large numbers of people, both inside and outside the business. By converting them and spreading word of your activity to them, you are by implication reaching out to their own web of contacts. So that one day when your name comes up for a booking, in an interview or in idle conversation they are able to say, "Oh yes, I know them, I speak to their (guitarist, bassist, drummer) all the time." It's called top of mind consciousness, and you want to make sure that your name is right up there, both with the public and with the people you do business with, to advance your band's career.

No matter what your personal agendas are with regard to recording and releasing your material, another obvious group of people to network with is record label employees. Actually, you will find plenty of them at gigs. Not all people that work at record labels have any power to assist you, but by making and establishing contact with

them, once again you are spreading word of your business into the places where it can make a difference. Many of the smaller independent labels are staffed by passionate young people who make a point of seeing as much new South African music as they can. You need to find out who these people are and make sure you get introduced to them. Don't bother trying to sell yourself to them at first. Just make sure you get introduced and get a business card, and that they get to hear your name. And keep greeting them every time you see them out. To do more would be to annoy. You have to trust that all your other marketing threads are working and that the person concerned is making the connections that s/he perhaps wouldn't make if you hadn't met.

Another critical group of people that you should target to network with is the media. Don't be fooled into thinking that this is as daunting as it sounds. At any given live show, there are often plenty of press people in attendance. Generally they are there to see what is new and cool, and are on the lookout for information. Just as with the record execs, it is your duty to meet them and establish awareness of yourself and your music in their heads. Next time they see your name in a gig listing they will remember. But please, as a journalist myself, I must stress: don't try and sell yourself lock, stock and barrel to a journalist over a beer late at night in a venue. Trust the rest of your process. Firstly, the confidence NOT to gush will impress most journalists. Secondly, it is just unprofessional and uncool to try to persuade a person of influence with your enthusiasm on a first meeting. Remember that they are the people with the power at this stage and you need to be respectful of that. If you are

committed to networking effectively, you will be seeing and speaking to these people a lot in the future, when there will be time for conversations of all kinds to take place.

The point of healthy networking is to establish a network of professional people with an awareness of you and what you do, and the ability to assist you – and for you to assist them. So remember that often the exact reason for meeting someone might not be immediately apparent. Don't NOT talk to them just because they are not journalists. In your travels as an emerging musician you will need to call on designers, cameramen, photographers, website builders, sponsors, sound engineers and many others. So be polite, be interested, be interesting. Make sure you can contact everyone you meet again outside of the place of your meeting. Take and give business cards freely, put numbers on your phone. The whole point of networking is to build as big a network as possible. So don't be snobby about it. Embrace the process with heart and commitment. Remember that this is your life and your career you are building and that any number of people are well-placed to help you realise your dreams if only you could meet them.

But also remember that, while you are out there trying to meet people, looking for influence and assistance, so is everyone else that you talk to. Networking is a two-way street and if you expect people that you have met to help you out, you must be prepared to do the same. Anyone who makes new contacts and then proceeds to just take without ever helping out in return, will soon lose those contacts. Be nice, be polite and attentive, be on time and remember to give back.



# CHAPTER 19

## TOURING

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touring

**THE** idea of leaving home to hit the road on tour is what many musicians live for. In many ways it is the archetypal band activity: hanging with your mates, meeting new people and playing your music as if it is all you do. Touring is a very different activity from just playing gigs in your hometown though. So you need to be adequately prepared. The first bit of preparation is to manage your expectations of what it will be like and how successful you can be. The last thing you need is to hit the road with unrealistic expectations and then come home and give up because it didn't go as well as you'd planned.

Any artist leaving home and going on tour needs to be well prepared. You also need to have money in the bank to bail you out should anything go wrong. Remember that no matter the hype about you in your hometown, things can be very different just a hundred kilometers down the road. Do not ever assume that just because one town loves you that everyone is going to. For your first couple of trips out of your hometown, you are probably going to be accepting door deals, which means you cannot rely on that money to get you around or to pay for any of the costs that you will incur on the road. In other words, don't go touring until you know you have enough money to pay for your food, transport and accommodation before you leave.

This where your networking and marketing skills will be the most important they have been to you so far.

In order to reach out to a whole new town and its scene, you need to ask for help from the friends you have made in the industry. You need to find out where is good to play, what their normal deals are, and how good attendance is for out-of-town bands. You need to be in touch with the club owners, the sound guys and the local music press long before you get there to make sure that everything is sorted out and that they are in fact expecting you!



If you have never played outside of your hometown before, the issue of in-house sound might never have occurred to you. Some venues

provide a sound system as part of their infrastructure and others don't. When considering touring for the first time ever, you need to ascertain where you are going to play and what the situation is with sound. Often if a venue does not have its own system, it will have a local person who brings in a PA. Talk to this person. When playing for the first time in front of a new crowd you really need to make sure you get it right. Each show in a new place is like your first ever show all over again: you must pay excellent attention to detail and make sure you leave the best possible impression.

Setting up. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden



**"Too often artists hit the road thinking only of the parties, the groupies, the drugs and the time away from their normal routines. In fact, in order to make touring work for you, as an artist you need to plan carefully and think out your options well in advance."**

Kevin Winder, former road manager for the James Taylor Quartet (UK), Urban Creep and the Springbok Nude Girls, owner of The Mercury Live and Lounge

Because many venues don't have in-house sound systems, many bands contemplate hiring or buying and touring with their own PAs. Make sure you talk to other bands who have played the venues you are targeting and find out the cost of hiring a sound rig, who is good or not, and what kind of sound you can expect. Go in there prepared.

It is normal for bands to tour with full backline: that is, with your own instruments, amplification and drum kit (if you use one). If other bands are on the bill with you and you can't travel with that much gear, you will need to negotiate directly with the other bands to sort out the sharing of equipment. This is crucial. Do not rely on the venue or the sound guy to sort out your backline. Either bring your own or talk directly to the people whose equipment you want to use.

The costs you can expect to incur include the following:

- petrol and tolls
- flights
- car hire
- accommodation
- food
- sound hire (PA and/or engineer)
- doorperson
- marketing: flyers/posters
- postage

Mostly these can easily be worked out in advance, so you have no excuse for being caught short. As a unit you will also soon learn how to cut costs by negotiating things like door staff and insisting on a meal at the venue as part of the deal. Unless you have an agreement in place with the promoter or the venue, realise that on a door deal there are no guarantees. You need to be able to get yourself and your crew home after the show.

However, also make sure that you can maximise your earnings. In other words, if there are options on accommodation, take the cheap one. Rather crash on the floor at the support band's place than pay for a backpackers. Rather pay for a backpackers than a hotel and so on. This is where your merchandise can also really save you. By selling tee shirts, stickers, pins and CDs you can up your earnings on a night significantly. When you are on the road that could mean the next tank of petrol or the next night's accommodation.

Be prepared for touring in every way, not just in the sense that musically you think you are ready to leave home.

## COSTS

As mentioned earlier, touring costs money, and your outfit needs to be prepared to pay its own way once you leave home.

The trick is to always be prepared for the worst-case scenario when it comes to touring and finances. You must be prepared for the band to have to pay for the entire tour and to make no money whatsoever. What this means in practice is that you need to know how much everything is going to cost you before you leave home AND to leave home with enough money to pay all of those costs, regardless of what you earn.



## MARKETING

When you hit the road for the first time and start playing to a brand new audience, your marketing suddenly becomes very, very important. It is at this stage that

you are going to have to spend money on it. A key thing to realise is that the band is most likely to lose money the first couple of times it leaves town on tour. It's not a golden rule, but it is the most likely scenario. You need to understand that the first couple of

tours are actually marketing exercises in themselves and not really earning opportunities. Because very few people outside of your hometown will know you, you are using your performance as a marketing tool to introduce yourselves. In order to make that as effective as possible, you need to make use of every weapon available to you to get people to that show.

Firstly, make sure you know what the venue does in the way of marketing. Do they do flyers and posters? Do they have an SMS database? Do they post gigs on their website? Do they send





Soundcheck. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

**"Apart from being prepared financially and logistically, you also need to be prepared to take advantage of the marketing opportunity that touring represents. Make sure that you have enough merchandise, and have made arrangements to sell it at each venue. Make sure you have your albums, tee shirts and all that ready, priced and good to go."**

Kevin Winder, former road manager for The James Taylor Quartet (UK), Urban Creep and the Springbok Nude Girls, owner of The Mercury Live and Lounge

information to the local press? Make sure you give them more than enough information on your band to help them get the word out. Secondly, you will most likely be playing with a local band as well. Get in touch with the members and make sure they are also doing flyers and, if they have a database, that they are communicating the gig to them. Make sure Facebook and MySpace have the shows up and that your friends are spreading the word to their friends in other cities.

Then send out your own press release about the show to the local press and websites. Send them good photos of yourself, just as you have been doing at home. But make sure information spreads as wide as it can. Just because the media will be excited to have a new band in town doesn't mean everyone will be.

Sometimes venues do their own generic flyers for each month's gigs, but generally you will need to make one yourself. Depending on how much of a tour you are doing, it is often advisable to create a flyer that features all your gigs countrywide. This has two major benefits. Firstly, of course, it saves money and secondly, it really gives the right impression to people that see it. Not only are you coming to their town, but you are touring the whole country. It makes you look successful and established, and impressed people are more likely to come to your show. Make sure that the venue and the support band have flyers at least three weeks before the show takes place. This needs to be the case for every show on your tour, so get your flyers designed and printed in good time. Also make sure you get them posted or delivered to the venues in good time so that they can actually be used.

Remember that every show, every flyer and press release serve two functions. Firstly, to get people through the door to earn the band money so that you can continue to grow and reach for your goals. Secondly, to spread the word far and wide so that next time people see or hear your name, they know who you are and how good you are. If they are not doing both for you at all times, you need to look carefully at the choices you are making and perhaps adjust your thinking. Nobody likes to play a gig that doesn't pay, but if it is effective in spreading your name, it could have been worthwhile. If it does neither, you are in trouble.

# CHAPTER 20

## FINANCES

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**I**n chapter seven we discussed some of the obvious challenges around the group earning money, as well as several approaches to agreeing to deal with this. In this chapter we take a more in-depth look at the financial implications of earning money as a band and the various options you have to deal with this.

There is much discussion in the last few chapters of this book around agreements and contracts. The advice that is given here is general, commonsensical and informed by experience. As such it will give you a good idea of what to expect in and from agreements and contracts, and give you some sensible guidelines for dealing with them. What this advice is NOT, however, is professional legal advice. If you need to make sure any of your agreements are full and finally legally binding you will need a lawyer to draft them, check them and make sure they are correct. These guidelines will teach you what to expect, but not make you enough of an expert to do everything yourself.

### GIG EARNINGS

Whatever split you have agreed upon as a unit, there is always going to be money that is earned from the gigs that belongs to the band as a whole. It is this money that you will be using to fund all the other activities that you undertake as a band, such as making merchandise, going on tour, recording and so on. In other words, there are plenty of uses for this cash and it needs to be looked after. It is critically important that the revenue split you have decided on for gig money does in fact take place and that the band money is kept separate from the cash going to individual members. If you do not do this, you will find that everything you undertake will have to be funded with your own personal money and this is where arguments within bands tend to begin.

It needs to be the appointed task of one of your band members to look after this function. The designated member needs to ensure that all money is split up according to your agreement, that each member gets his or her share and that the band's share is secured. Clearly the member tasked with this role has to be good with numbers, honest and trustworthy. The best way to keep all the band money separate is to bank it. Of course this means that there does need to be a separate bank account.



### BANKING

You will need to check with your bank of choice as to what your options are, but you will need to open a new account that you can keep your band money in. This is not because anyone may not be honest enough to NOT spend the band money, but for transparency and ease of tracking. Furthermore, if you reach this level, it provides a clear and trackable record of all your finances for tax purposes.

There are several banking options

available to you. Many banks will not let you open an account in the name of a band without it being a registered company. Some may allow you to do so, but due to the new credit control legislation and FICA rulings, this is generally not acceptable. Therefore you either need to register the band as a CC or accept that the bank account you use will be in the name of the individual whose job it is to look after the money. If you are seriously concerned about reliability issues, get two members to sign up for a joint account with joint control.



The point of having a bank account is that it is easier for promoters and venues to pay you guarantees if you have a bank account (they can just do electronic transfers) and it is easier for the band to pay for things using the same method. It is also just safer than keeping the money in a box under someone's bed! But more importantly, it's about setting intent. By organising your affairs in this manner you are saying that you expect to earn well and will need a bank account in order to keep track. After all, that is why you are doing this, isn't it?

## DISBURSMENT

Apart from the sharing of money that you may have agreed to, you may also have agreed that the band should pay for certain things like guitar strings, drumsticks and skins, petrol for shows and so on. This is best undertaken on a monthly basis and not on the night of any given show. Matters at shows are always chaotic and it is too easy to make mistakes. Rather do it during normal working hours when everyone is awake and sober and you can keep exact track of what is going on. For the sake of the person in control of your money, this is best. If any slip-ups occur here, it is s/he who will be blamed when it may not in fact be his or her fault. Make sure that you obtain and keep slips for everything you buy. Firstly, because you want to know how much it actually costs to keep the band running like this and secondly, you will need them later for tax records.

Keep every single slip that relates to purchases made by the band, be it for

petrol, food or equipment. Remember that you are running a business and all your spending needs to be accounted for so that everyone in the unit is satisfied that there is financial transparency and clarity. Just because it is one person's job to look after the money does not mean that only s/he needs to know what the state of the band finances is. Make sure that the status can be obviously and clearly shared at all times. And again, once it comes to tax time, you will need this paper trail as most of these items are tax-deductible and will assist you in complying with the law.

## ACCOUNTS

To assist with purchases like guitar strings and drumsticks, it is possible that you can open an account with your local music shop in the name of the band. Once again this will need to be controlled properly, but it does facilitate monthly, trackable payments to cover running costs in equipment. However, as with all credit agreements, I must counsel caution in doing this. Do not enter into an account arrangement because you don't have the cash to pay for equipment now. Rather wait until you have the cash. It is a device that will make your accounting and money control easier; do not see it as a bank for free gear. You will have to pay sometime, and it's best that you know you can pay when you buy than to have no clue as to when you might be able to pay.

## COMPANIES

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, you may want to register the band as a company. This is a pretty serious step, but one you will have to take if you are serious about what you are doing. Under current SA law, the best company structure to go for would be a CC. This system is still in place at time of writing, but may give way to PTY companies, and all registered CCs will automatically be migrated. Unless you are a one-person business, you obviously cannot operate as a sole trader, because there are

**"I actually cannot remember how many promising bands I have seen implode because of disagreements over money. If there is one piece of advice I can and always do give to musos it is to sort out a solid agreement over money upfront and stick to it."**

Deon Maas, music industry consultant,  
owner Meerkat Media

multiple members in a band. If however, you are a solo artist, you could in fact operate as a sole trader and not have to worry about registering a CC at all.

This is where it is so important that you have all your intra-band agreements worked out and in place early on. With the formation of a CC, all members become members in the business that is your band. As such, when you set

up the CC, each member is allocated a percentage. Obviously this percentage needs to reflect the arrangement you have in the band with regards to your profit-share. If you are splitting everything equally, then you all need to be equal partners in the CC. So in a four-piece band, you will each be 25% shareholders and so on. In the event of the dissolution of the band, any monies in the company will be disbursed according to this agreement.

Registering a company for your band is a signal of real intent: that you intend to stay together as a band and a business for a long time, and that you are intending to go far and earn real money. If you are a solo artist or use session musicians, obviously your company arrangements will be only in your own name and thus slightly simpler to run. But you might still consider registering a company as it is more beneficial from a tax perspective in the long run, and it ensures that there is excellent transparency in your earnings, keeping them separate from your day-to-day financial affairs.

## ROYALTIES

Once you are registered with a collections agency like SAMRO, this is the organisation that will pay out royalties. These royalties will be paid into the individual bank accounts directly according to the songwriting information provided when you registered with them. Royalties accrue to the composers of songs in different ways, including performance, licensing and mechanical royalties. We will go into these different areas in more detail in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 21

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND LEGAL

**ONE** of the biggest recurring horror stories told about the music industry is that of intellectual property theft. This mainly occurs when ignorant musicians and composers are exploited by ruthless business people. The only way to put a stop to this is for the average musician, composer and performer to become more educated on the issues surrounding the protection of their intellectual property and their rights in connection with it.

### COPYRIGHT

If you are composing your own music, the first thing you need to be aware of is copyright.

Copyright is actually a set of rights granted to the owner of intellectual property. The owner of copyright under this title has the exclusive rights to do and authorise any of the following:

1. reproduce the copyrighted work in copies or phonorecords
2. prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work
3. distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending

4. in the case of literary, musical, dramatic and choreographic works, pantomimes, motion pictures and other audio-visual works, to perform the copyrighted work publicly

5. in the case of literary, musical, dramatic and choreographic works, pantomimes, and pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works, including the individual images of a motion picture or other audio-visual work, to display the copyrighted work publicly.

Ideas for compositions are not protected, nor are styles of performing or new ways of generating sounds. A composition that exists only in the composer's head is not eligible for copyright protection. Similarly, the content of an improvisational jazz performance is not covered unless it has been recorded. Generally the title of a composition, song, book or other writing lacks sufficient literary content to be copyrighted. However, other statutes could be violated should one creative entity be passed off as another, or if income is lost as the result of confusion between identical titles.

A copyright that is not registered anonymously or under a pseudonym and that is not in a work made for hire runs for the author's lifetime plus 50 years after his or her death.

In South Africa, copyright is regulated by the South African Copyright Act (No. 98 of 1978). By virtue of the Copyright Act, copyright subsists automatically in the original work of any South African citizen, resident or domicile, both prior to publication and after publication. Ownership of the copyright in a work rests in its author(s), unless the author(s) agree(s) in writing to assign the copyright. The law recognises the right of both the author (lyrics) and the composer (music) to be recognised as the originators and therefore owners of any musical work.

What this means is that the moment you compose a song you are recognised as the owner of its copyright. All that remains after that is to make sure that you can prove this if such a fact should ever be disputed. In the case of the music business, this is most easily achieved by becoming a member of SAMRO and lodging each new song that you write with it. In this way the date of the membership acts as a legal and binding proof of the date of origination and of your right to be recognised as the owner of the copyright on the work.

The old time-honoured method of printing up the sheet music and sending it to yourself via registered mail is still perfectly legally binding as a means of proving the date of origination of the work as per the date stamp of the registered letter.

It is not uncommon for an author or composer to assign copyright to another party. In the case of composing adverts or jingles or any such corporate work, this is often the case. The law only recognises a written assignation of copyright as being legally binding, however. Verbal agreements are not considered binding. So until such time as a composer actually physically

Jon Savage (Cassette). Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**"Sometimes a recording deal may appear wonderful because a huge advance is being offered. However it could bind an artist for a long period, at inferior royalty rates, or commit the artist to the wrong deal from a strategic perspective."**

Marc Friedman, entertainment lawyer



signs a contract assigning copyright to another party, the composer remains the copyright owner. A general warning must be sounded here on assigning your copyright to a 3rd party. This is a sure-fire way to lose out on all future earnings from your creative endeavours. Do not cede your copyright to anyone. Rather negotiate a licensing agreement than cede copyright away from yourself. The world is a fickle place and there is no telling when the works you have composed may earn you an income. The rights around intellectual property are a very good source of income for artists and to sign away your copyright means you are signing away any possibility of future earnings.

The copyright act recognises two kinds of copyright in South Africa when it comes to music. These are musical works and sound recordings. Each kind involves different people and needs to be understood differently. The following table shows who comes into play under each form of copyright.

Once you have assured yourself that you can prove your copyright ownership, the thing is to make sure that you are protected and understand what this right entitles you to.

As you will see from the table below, both the mechanical right and

the performance right are granted to a copyright owner by law as two of the distinct parts of a copyright. The mechanical right is really the right to reproduce a piece of music onto records or tapes. (Non-mechanical reproduction includes such things as making sheet music, for which royalties are paid by the publisher to the composer.) When reproduction of music is made onto a soundtrack of a film or TV show, the reproduction is called "synchronisation," and the license that the TV or film producer needs to obtain is called a synchronisation or "synch" license. Mechanical royalties and synchronisation fees are paid by record companies and film and TV producers directly to the copyright owner, usually the publisher, or its representative.

The public performance right entitles the copyright owner to receive royalties when the song is sung or played, recorded or live, in a public place or on radio and television. Such royalties go to both the composer and publisher through their performing rights organisations, which grant licenses to perform the music in their respective repertoires to thousands of music users, such as broadcasters, hotels, night-clubs, universities, restaurants, shops, etc.

	Musical Works	Sound Recordings
Units	Compositions or songs including melody, lyrics	Master tapes or CDs of recorded material
Involved Parties	Songwriters/composers Music publishers Collections societies	Recording artists Record companies Collection societies
Ownership	The individual/s who wrote the material	The party that pays for the recordings
Copyright	Performance / mechanical synchronisation	Mechanical / needle time master synchronisation



A "grand" right, on the other hand, is the right of the copyright owner to perform or license others to perform a song in a dramatic manner, such as accompanying the performance with costumes, scenery or plot; acting out the lyrics of the song; or, in the case of a piece of music originally written for a musical show, performing the song in conjunction with all or part of the scripted show. At present, the music contained on music videos is not considered to be grand right usage, even though certain videos might be considered by some to be dramatic representations of the lyrics.

In chapter 22 we will look more closely at the roles of publishers in this equation, what they should be doing for composers and what they cannot do.



The other major area of concern for new musicians and artists is contracts. As before, this chapter does not seek to make you an expert on contract law. However, what it does do is identify the key areas of contracts



Sliq Angel. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

**"Often being with the right company may be worth compromising a few royalty points. As an artist, one should always try and keep control of one's resources whether by trying to retain copyright or signing shorter deals, so that one can renegotiate."**

Marc Friedman, entertainment lawyer

and law so that you know what to look for. It also recommends an approach and a norm that you can expect. You should fully investigate any deviations from these norms. Remember, when drawing up contracts or agreements or signing them, always get the assistance of a trained professional. This book is not a law textbook and does not seek to cover every legal eventuality.

#### **Where you might be signing contracts:**

As a new artist, the contracts or agreements you can expect to be signing include intra-band member agreements, management contracts and recording contracts. There may be others but these are the major legal agreements that you might enter into early in your career.

With member and management contracts there are some basic key factors to be on the lookout for.

Make sure you are aware of the time limits of the contract. Is it forever, or for a finite period of time?

Make sure you understand the financial splits it specifies: what percentage of earnings does your manager get? Is that before or after costs? What percentage does each band member get?

Look for clauses pertaining to publishing rights and composer rights. Make sure you understand who is being recognised and rewarded for song compositions.

Look out for ownership clauses. Make sure you are not giving away any of your rights that you might not be aware of. Do not allow any management or band member agreement to include the ceding of copyright to any 3rd party.

Make sure you understand any performance-related clauses such as the right of the band to fire members or managers who do not do their jobs.

While it is unlikely that as a new artist you will be signing to a record label for an album deal, a basic understanding of what a recording contract normally entails and what these things mean will help you understand what to expect in the future. It will also help you establish realistic expectations of your future as an artist.

Here the most important and sometimes problematic areas of recording contracts have been identified

and common areas of misunderstanding explained. As above, with any contract, make sure that before you sign any such agreement, you have a lawyer look it over and advise you.



Every recording contract will specify a royalty rate at which the artist will be paid for agreeing to allow the record company to record and

manufacture the record. You need to make sure that the royalty being offered is reasonable, that you understand how it is calculated, and what may be included or excluded. A normal industry average for a new artist would be a royalty rate of 10%. The figure that this is calculated from is what is known as the ppd (published price to dealer) or wholesale price. In other words, not the price that the public pays, but the price that the record shops buy the album from the record company at. Most record deals will specify a deduction for packaging and warehousing as well as possibly a reserve against returns. Make sure you understand how much these figures are and what they mean. Warehouse and distribution will come off before your royalty, so the percentage you earn from each CD sale will be of the wholesale price less the warehousing charge.

For example: a CD sells at a store for R100. The CD store buys it from the record label for R50.00. The record label needs to recoup R8.00 per CD for warehousing and packaging. Therefore your royalty on each CD is 10% of R42.00, or R4.20.

When looking into your royalties also be sure to negotiate the needle time





royalty rate. We will be looking at this in more detail in the next chapter, but, loosely, needle time is a performance royalty that is split between the recording artist and the record company. Usually this is a 50/50 split, but a better deal can often be negotiated. Also make sure that you understand the royalties on digital exploitation of your recording by the record companies, such as ringtones, MP3 downloads and the like.

## RECOUPMENT

Another factor that affects royalty payouts is recoupment. This is the process by which record companies claim back capital expenditure from your album sales BEFORE starting to pay royalties. Make sure you understand what the record company wants to recoup before signing. Normally a record company will pay for recording, manufacture, distribution, design and marketing in advance. They may also give you an advance on your royalties and money for tour support. In the normal course of things they will seek to recoup this from your sales before paying you your royalties. What this means is that, if a record company pays out around R300 000 for recording, manufacturing, marketing and distributing your CD, selling it to stores at R50 and deducting warehousing and packaging as before, you will need to sell over 7 000 units before you even begin to see royalties on your album sales.

In other words you must be very clear on what you are agreeing to allow the record company to recoup. In the past horror stories of the tea lady's salary

being recouped from artist albums sales have dogged the industry. Make sure your record company spells out exactly what is being recouped and what the costs associated with each activity are.

## DURATION

Recording contracts will always specify duration. Make sure that you understand what this means. Typically a contract will specify an album or two or three, and a time period such as a year or five years, with options to record further material with the artist.

What these options mean is that, once the original specified recordings have been made, the record company reserves the right to record further material with the artist. The artist does not have the right to refuse these options under recording contracts, but the record company does. In other words, whether the options are taken or not is at the discretion of the record company.

Understanding the duration of your contract means that you can avoid legal unpleasantness by not attempting to record for another company while still under contract.

## RIGHTS

Traditionally, a recording contract only used to deal with sound recordings. That is to say the work that an artist recorded.

Not compositional rights or publishing or anything else. However, with the

mutation of the recording industry into a more live performance-focused, interactive industry, 360-degree deals are not uncommon. Under these agreements your record label will not only have the right to exploit your recordings, but your merchandise, live performance royalties, publishing and digital rights. You must make sure you understand what each right that you are signing away entails, and how you will be remunerated for its exploitation.

**"So, as with anything in life, it is always better to apply long-term, rather than short-term thinking. Delayed gratification often leads to long-term success."**

Marc Friedman, entertainment lawyer

If you are intending to only sign a recording deal, make sure that things like publishing, merchandising and live performance are excluded from the deal. If you are going to accept a 360-degree deal, then you MUST negotiate for an advance from the record label to sustain yourselves while the process takes off. This is because all revenue will then be going through your record label. This of course will take time, so

you will need cash to keep yourself going while you wait for your payments. Also make sure you know how regularly payment will be made to you and that you get proper accounting records as part of that process so you can monitor the deal yourself.

A record company will also reserve the right to use your name, images, likeness, photographs and biographical details for album promotion purposes. Make sure that it is restricted to this ONLY and that they do not claim the right to use your image to promote other products as well.

Under a normal recording contract, you will be signing as individuals, not as a group, if you are one. Each individual is contractually bound, even if s/he leaves the band later. What this means is that if the band splits up while under contract to a record label, the label can still pursue its options from each individual member. For example, if the group still owes the label two albums under the options clause of the contract, the record label can get two more albums from EACH member of the band if it so chooses. This is totally at the record company's discretion and is obviously highly unlikely. What it is likely to do, however, is exercise the right to options and additional work from the songwriting core of the band.

Similarly, if one band member leaves the band, in order to be allowed to record with anyone else s/he must seek release from the band contract in writing from the record label.

In the scenario of a band leaving a record label or a contract lapsing, there is also a prohibition on re-recording the contracted material for between five and seven years after the term of the contract expires or the release date of the original recordings.

# CHAPTER 22

## ORGANISATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS OF IMPORTANCE

**AS** your career progresses you will discover that there are several very important role players who fit into the matrix of the music business and who you will need to interact with. In this chapter we look at the organisations and businesses that can help you earn money and make a career out of your music, and explain their roles in some detail.

Protecting your music – that is, acting to assert your right to be recognised as its creator and owner and to benefit from all and any exploitation thereof – is the most important thing you can do as a musician and a composer. The news is full of alarming stories and tales of corruption and exploitation of ignorant musicians. These can generally be avoided if you act swiftly and sensibly to protect yourself and your music. And it's easier than you think!

The move into the Internet age has meant that there are so many ways to share music that it is next to impossible to track. Making free music available via the Internet is also a great way to market your band and your songs. As a result there are plenty of music sites trading in illegal downloads that do not pay artists for their work. So if you have uploaded a song onto your website WITHOUT first registering the song as yours, you are

exposing yourself to the risk of piracy. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to register your songs. In all likelihood you will be unable to stop all illegal copying of music, but once you have your registrations in place you can at least assert your right to be recognised as the owner and benefit from any such trading. Furthermore, by making legal downloads available, you are increasing the options for the public to do the right thing by making legal versions available as opposed to ignorantly letting whatever will happen, happen. It's not about being paranoid or vindictive, it's about establishing yourself and your reputation from the word go. It's about setting up the business of being a musician in a sensible and considered fashion.

If you have legally established your right to be recognised as the copyright owner of a work of music, you will always stand a chance of recovering income. But if you haven't, then you can basically forget it. There are many ways of legally establishing your right to be recognised as the copyright owner of a work. One of the simplest is to join a music collection agency such as SAMRO or NORM. NORM is involved here because the digital replication of your recordings accrues a mechanical right that is collected by this society

Sliq Angel. Photo by Kevin S. Flee





## PUBLISHING

In music, publishing is the term that refers to the publishing of your music, its melody and lyrics. Publishers are people who look after

your rights in connection with your compositions. This is an essential part of the business because the monetary returns from the exploitation of your repertoire of songs can depend on a good publisher. You don't need to have done anything other than written songs in order to sign up with a publisher. S/he will agree a royalty split with you in return for the execution of duties, which means s/he will spend time looking for deals for your music whereby you earn money. This could include licensing your songs to adverts, movie soundtracks, other artists and the like. Should you already have a record deal or a synch deal in place, they will also administer these and make sure that your percentages are collected.

Through a contractual agreement, the songwriter assigns to the publisher the right to represent him/her in all matters regarding the protection, the exhibition and the exploitation of his/her patrimonial rights (the rights accruing to the person recognised as the author or creator of the work). The relationship between songwriter and publisher is ideally based on objectives agreed upon between the two, which the publisher then sets out to achieve. By assigning your rights to a publisher, you as the composer are giving him/her a mandate to achieve these agreed objectives. S/he remains bound by the songwriter's moral right to define limits to the use of his/her repertoire. Thus, the publisher can never substitute him/herself as the songwriter, who remains the master of his/her rights.

Among other tasks, the publisher will have to defend the songwriter in dealings with the different professions of the entertainment industry: performers, record labels, organisers and any potential user of the songwriter's repertoire. The publisher is the only professional element in the entertainment industry empowered to represent exclusively the interests of the songwriter. As such, s/he works in close consultation with the songwriter's producer, agent or manager. The publisher is also an important financial player in the industry.

The first task of the publisher is to make sure that the repertoire has been properly registered with the boards and societies whose function it is not only to recognise the paternity of the works, but also to collect the rights derived from their exploitation. Present and future remuneration of the author are dependent on the quality of this protection.

In South Africa this means registering the copyright of the songwriter's works with SAMRO for the national territory and with foreign societies for foreign territories. It also entails the control of the registered repertoire and registering of new songs. In other words, your publisher needs to establish and maintain a good working relationship with SAMRO and other performing rights management societies.

The mandate of the publisher empowers him/her to represent the songwriter at the administrative level and discuss the remuneration that is due to the author whom s/he represents. It will be the publisher's duty to collect all the proofs of the exploitation of the author's repertoire, at both national and international level. The publisher will regularly take stock with SAMRO, which has reciprocal agreements with similar



Tenn Elliot (The Hellphones). Photo by Kevin S. Flee

foreign societies, of the collection of the rights generated by the songwriter's repertoire, nationally and internationally. The publisher will also be concerned with the speed of these disbursements.

In order to reinforce its work in each territory, the original publisher will constitute a network of sub-publishers by sub-contracting the repertoire to a local publisher. Thus, a South African publisher can, for example, partly delegate to a German publisher (against remuneration deducted from the original publisher's share) to do for the repertoire in Germany

what it already does in South Africa: protection, exploitation and promotion of the repertoire. The German sub-publisher will be bound to provide regular information on the use of the songwriter's repertoire in that country.

The protection of the repertoire will be all the more efficient, as the publisher is financially concerned with the use (and misuse) of the repertoire and has a mandate to represent the interests of the songwriter in a court of law.

## HOW A PUBLISHER CAN HELP YOU

### Exploitation and development of repertoire

The publisher defines a number of strategies which will offer a higher “visibility” and better exploitation of the repertoire (your songs), both nationally and internationally.

#### A) Exploitation through records

If, at the time of signing up a new author, part his/her repertoire is also exploited through records, the first preoccupation of the publisher will be to define with the record company the development of the forthcoming albums. Based on its international experience, the publisher plays a role close to the record companies and helps them to search for better international exploitation opportunities for their productions.

Within South Africa, your publisher will promote the interests of the songwriter with the record label to which he/she has already contracted. This collaboration implies the participation of the publisher in all decisions regarding the presentation, communication and distribution of the images bound up with the songwriter and his/her repertoire — whether s/he is also the performer or not.

The publisher also has the task of presenting the author's songs to both

national and foreign producers in order to encourage their distribution. This is particularly true for the exploitation of old repertoire: a compilation is often a good device for the publisher to reactivate part of the catalogue.

In some territories where the producer is not directly present, the publisher can act as a helper or stand-in for the producer and promote deals with a local distributor. Even in territories where no sub-publishing deal has been made, the publisher sends a mailing to the record companies and producers in order to encourage the inclusion of the songwriter's works on records made by local artists. The objective being to establish the songwriter's presence in as many territories as possible.

#### B) Public performance

Another objective of the publisher is to protect the public performance of the songwriter's repertoire in liaison with the performer's agent. The publisher should define the place that the public performance occurs in the quest for a wider exhibition of the repertoire.

A publisher will cooperate with the producer/agent in sending information and promotional material to the organisers of concerts, especially abroad. Thereafter, it is the role of the agent to manage and develop these contacts. The financial participation of the publisher in these concerts can be envisaged by mutual agreement with the songwriter.

#### C) Broadcasting

Broadcasting is both an important element in the promotional strategy and an important source of revenue, considering the high royalties paid in some countries by the radio and television networks. In many European countries the broadcasting rights match or exceed the revenue from mechanical rights. Here too the publisher plays an important role in the promotion of the repertoire by sending promotional material to the radio stations when the producers have not done so. Specialised radio stations should be targeted in the case of a niche repertoire.

The work of the publisher also includes endeavouring to associate

the songwriter's work with images in fields such as advertising, films, documentaries and even corporate videos. This association constitutes a use that was not originally intended for the work; hence, specific negotiations with the users will be required, but always in close coordination with the author (who may not wish to be associated with an ad for alcohol or cigarettes, etc.).

Besides such use of the repertoire, the publisher's contacts with the above users often give rise to orders for specific compositions (music for an ad, or a film, for example). If the songwriter so desires, the publisher can extend the search for this type of collaboration to any source of image production.

Photo by Kevin S. Flee



**“The sooner you get your publishing sorted the better. It's like a retirement annuity: the longer you write songs (pay in) the more money you earn. Every month counts when it comes to retiring comfortably.”**

David Alexander, Sheer Music Publishing





### E) Reproduction

The reproduction in any kind — books, magazines, tee shirts, partitions, etc. — of the text and/or the music of a song accrues a mechanical royalty and as such must be authorised by its author.

This form of exploitation of a work is not dominant anymore and the rights that it generates are insignificant; however, it is part of the traditional prerogatives of a publisher's profession and, thanks to the demand for notation on the Internet, is actually currently experiencing a massive period of growth. It is sometimes a very appropriate way of promoting a repertoire among specialised groups (musicians, specialist magazines, students, etc.) A good quality print release reinforces the image of any repertoire. With remixes it is musical

adaptation that is predominant, in fact far outstripping lyric adaptation and sampling.

### F) Adaptation

When we speak of adaptation, most of the time we mean the lyrics, because language can be an obstacle to the circulation of a song in a foreign territory. An adaptation will facilitate the exhibition of a song in some territories. But we also speak of adaptation when we adapt a melody to a text that may not have a melody (i.e. adapting a poem to a song). More recently, the remix has become a popular method of adaptation, with the melody and lyrics remaining the property of the owner, but the rhythm changing.

Finally, in order to obtain good results, the publisher must establish

good relationships with all those who contribute to the development of the songwriter's repertoire, such as record companies, producers and agents. This is, after all, what the music industry is all about.

## INDUSTRY ORGANISATIONS OF IMPORTANCE

Collection societies are companies that have been established by composers all over the world, to track down music that is being played and sold, and to collect the

royalties owed to the artists. It would be next to impossible for you in your individual capacity to do this; hence the existence of such organisations. These organisations handle mechanical reproduction rights (profiting from the manufacture of copies of your work) and performing rights (profiting from the performance, broadcast and use of music in TV and films), as well as neighbouring rights. Soon in South Africa there will also be needle time rights, which certain companies are being accredited to handle.

### SAMRO

SAMRO is the biggest of these collection agencies in South Africa as it deals with both performance and mechanical reproduction rights. The name stands for Southern African Music Rights Organisation. SAMRO was created by composers and musicians to protect their rights and to collect monies owed to them from live performances, on air or elsewhere. It is controlled by a board of directors elected by its membership and represents directly the interests of

its members. The function of SAMRO is to administer your royalties. So it does all of the negotiations, calculations and payments due to you on your behalf.

SAMRO also administers mechanical rights; that is to say it also collects royalties due to artists for the manufacturing of music on a physical level, such as on a CD, cassette or vinyl. Every time your music is transferred from one physical carrier to another, like from a master to a CD, mechanical royalties are due. This compensation takes the form of a percentage of the CD, cassette or vinyl's retail price. Some of the other collection agencies also administer mechanical rights, but their membership is mutually exclusive. In other words, you can only sign up to one.

### NORM

The National Organisation For Reproduction Rights in Music in Southern Africa (NORM) has been operating since the '70s and is a mechanical rights collection agency. Its sole function is the administration of the right to compensation due to artists for the physical reproduction of their work in the form of CDs, cassette and vinyl. It is a one-stop-shop where those requiring a mechanical license, or permission from the copyright owner to make reproductions, can apply to do so. It is the organisation that music publishers join in order to facilitate this mechanical licensing process. The four major publishers in SA are members: Sony/ATV Music Publishing, Gallo Music Publishers, EMI Music Publishing and Universal/BMG Music publishing. It also has well over 100 independent publishers as members. If you are a songwriter and have a repertoire of songs, you can also apply for membership.



Skwatta Kamp. Photo by Kevin S. Flee

**"Often a publisher will buy into a writer/artist before a record label. It's investment is lower and it can afford to take some chances and sign writers/artists who are not producing the same as everybody else is."**

David Alexander, Sheer Music Publishing

### RiSA

The Recording Industry of South Africa (RiSA) is the body that represents the SA Recording industry. Forming part of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) its mission is to promote the value of recorded music, safeguard the rights of recorded music and expand the commercial uses of recorded music.

Examples of these activities include the SAMAs, the national Anti-Piracy Drive, the creation of SAMPRA (needle time royalties) and the act of certifying sales.



### Mechanical

Mechanical royalties accrue through the manufacture of physical music delivery systems such as CDs, vinyl and cassettes. Every time a CD is pressed,

the composer is entitled to a mechanical royalty for the use of his or her material. Mechanical royalties are payable only to those people who have written the work. Each song you submit to SAMRO should therefore reflect who the composer and the lyricist are so that the relevant people can receive their royalties correctly

### Performance

Every time a song you have written is performed you are entitled to a royalty, which SAMRO collects on your behalf from venues, broadcasters and the like. Again, performance royalties are payable only to those people who have written the work. Each song you submit to SAMRO should once again reflect who the composer and the lyricist are so that the relevant people can receive their royalties correctly.



Festival audience. Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

### Needle time

Needle time royalty remunerates music performers (vocalists and instrumentalists) as well as owners of sound recordings (record companies), for the public performance of their recorded performances (in the case of musicians), and their sound recordings (in the case of record companies or producers of records). It benefits performers, including session musicians who performed when the music was recorded.

Unlike performance rights which are paid to the author, composer, and publisher of the music for the public performance of their musical works, needle time royalties are about recorded performances, not musical works. It is paid to the musicians who performed

when the music was recorded.

This revenue is collected from broadcasters and any establishment that uses recorded music in public. It is a new royalty and it presents great opportunities for South African musicians. From now on musicians will be paid a royalty when recorded music in which they participated is performed in public.

A new organisation, SAMPRA, has been accredited by CIPRO to administer needle time rights on behalf of recording artists/performers. All musicians need to do to register their claims is assign their needle time rights to SAMPRA. Assigning their rights to SAMPRA means that they are authorising SAMPRA to administer these rights on their behalf.



# IMPORTANT ORGANISATIONS

## **SAMRO**

Southern African Music  
Rights Organisation  
SAMRO Place  
20 De Korte Street  
Braamfontein 2001

Tel: 011 712 8000  
customerservices@samro.org.za  
[www.samro.org.za](http://www.samro.org.za)

## **NORM**

The National Organisation  
for Reproduction Rights in  
Music in Southern Africa  
Taariq Crescent  
30 Jellicoe Avenue  
Rosebank 2196

Tel: 011 447 8870  
jillg@norm.co.za  
[www.norm.co.za](http://www.norm.co.za)

## **CASA**

Composers Association of South  
Africa exco@composers.co.za  
[www.composers.co.za](http://www.composers.co.za)

## **CWUSA**

Creative Workers Union of South  
Africa Tel: 011 339 1676



Big Willy (Fuzigish). Photo by Jacqui Van Staden

## **AIRCO**

Association of Independent  
Record Companies  
85 1st Avenue  
Melville 2196  
Email: info@airco.org.za  
Tel: 011 482 8305  
[www.airco.org.za](http://www.airco.org.za)

## **MMFSA**

Music Managers Forum South Africa  
[www.mmfsa.co.za](http://www.mmfsa.co.za)

## **RiSA**

Recording Industry of South  
Africa Suite 4  
150 Braam Fischer Drive  
Randburg  
Tel: 011 886 1342  
kolo@risa.org.za  
[www.risa.org.za](http://www.risa.org.za)

## **MOSHITO**

South African Music Conference  
and Exhibition  
10 Henry Nxumalo street  
Newtown  
JHB  
Tel: 011 838 9145  
lee@moshito.co.za  
[www.moshito.co.za](http://www.moshito.co.za)

## **ICASA**

South African Broadcasting  
Regulator Blocks A, B, C and D,  
Pinmill Farm  
164 Katherine Street Sandton  
Tel: 011 566 3000/1  
info@icasa.org.za  
[www.icasa.org.za](http://www.icasa.org.za)



*David Chislett*

# ONE, TWO, ONE, TWO

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN MUSIC INDUSTRY

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