

The Danger of Money in Music

It kind of all began with Mozart. To help support his ventures as a musician he would play to small, private audiences of rich aristocrats, for a fee, of course. Over time the whole concept changed from someone creating music and people paying to enjoy it, to artists being paid to create music or poetry about a king, lord, or aristocrat.

The lesson may be from a long time ago, but don't think for one second that the concept isn't still being applied today. Right now there are two forms of music existing: corporate and artistic. The main difference of the two is a matter of intention. For corporate music the main intention is to create a product that makes money. Every step in the process of creating this music is guided by that single factor.

Step 1. Find an attractive person, musical talent not necessarily required (i.e. Britney Spears).

Step 2. Record music with formulaic, overdone, non-confrontational, non-creative lyrics and structure. Create music that in no way challenges anything, sort of like ocean waves crashing into the shore.

Step 3. Base advertising campaign around the attractiveness of the "artist". Have pictures of musician in sexual poses, and give something for old men and teenagers to masturbate to.

Step 4. Use the same concept in making a music video. Apply no artistic eye to videos whatsoever, trying to make the focus of the video around showing off the sexiness of the half naked female artists or around the half naked women surrounding the male artists. (Side note – Something that's always bugged me is the speech that Fiona Apple gave at the MTV awards a couple of years back, about loving yourself and don't fall into media expectations of being beautiful and all that bullshit. Did you see the video that she won that fucking award for? You think she was walking around the set in her underwear or in that scene where she's in the bathtub naked saying, "I think this may give people the wrong idea of beauty?" Of course not! Why does everything corporate musicians say just seem like a marketing ploy?)

Step 5. Go on tour charging a ridiculous amount of money for tickets, to the largest, most impersonal venues on the face of the planet.

In the end the music sucks and the 'artist' becomes spoiled, complacent, and unimaginative.

For an artistically minded band the intentions for creating music are to... well... MAKE MUSIC. Making a song and being really proud of what you've done and created on your own. I was watching that ridiculous Ashley Simpson show and she was complaining that one of her songs sucked and she hated playing it. Well, you know what, don't play the fucking song then!

A true artist's goal is to create something beautiful. No deadlines, no money, nothing. Just hand them a guitar and let them do their thing. It's the way music used to be until the Beatles played Shay Stadium or Led Zeppelin could afford their own jet, and people started realizing that millions of dollars could be made from music.

So now there are tons and tons of bands starting up with the sole intent of being Rockstars. They want fame and they want fortune. And the flaw is that it corrupts the process of creating art. What happens is that the artist begins to worry about profit margin, target audiences, opportunity costs, supply and demand, and then the transition happens where the artist is no longer an artist, but a businessman. The art is corrupted because its not art anymore.

Art is truly created for something personal. It's something you make for yourself that you can share with the rest of the world and hope that people can learn and grow from. A product, which is what music is nowadays, is concerned with what audiences will buy and like.

Now, it's really hard for me to be sitting here and saying, "no one should make money from their art." People have rent, they have to eat, and they need time to be able to create their music. It would be ridiculously idealist to say that all artists should only try to recover the money they put into their art and if they make extra they should reinvest it into future projects or to help other bands out. I really, really wish that were possible, but it's not. So as I work my three jobs to try to live, pay for the zine, print up fliers, buy pizza from Bruno's, and try to put as much back into the scene as I can, I find myself being screwed out of hundreds of dollars by other people involved in the scene, because they want to make money not make a beautiful explosion of art. It's hard being a strict idealist!

But there are things that people as artists and as audiences can do to attempt to correct the problem. Don't buy corporate music. If you do, have a group of friends put together money to buy one album and just burn 20 copies, or even download it. As an artist, don't put out shit. If you do manage to get signed and you find yourself being rushed to make an album with some dickhead producer turning down the songs you create because he thinks, "they won't sell", then tell the label to go fuck themselves. **MAKE SURE A LAWYER ALWAYS READS YOUR CONTRACTS!** Make sure that it says you are the person who has final say on what you create and who you work with.

Even better than that, start your own damn label. You'd be surprised at the quality of some of the cheaper studios around here, and what a difference good mastering makes. In terms of pressing, consider costs. If pressing 3000 copies of an album costs \$2,000, and a CD cloner costs between \$500-\$1,000, you do the math as to which is worth more money.

It really is going back to that whole DIY thing. And a lot of people quote it, but do you really understand what it means? Basically, every step of the process of making an album is Do-It-Your-Fucking-Self. Eventually, the goal is to have everything in the entire process of creating to be you. If you need to record, buy a 4 track. If you need a CD pressed, buy a burner. If you need distribution, walk the album to the store your fucking self. The whole aim is to keep your record and your creation in your hands and your hands only.

So the next time someone says to you, "I'm going to be a Rockstar", turn them around, take their demo and shove it right up their ass and send them packing. Because we don't need stars, we just need music.