



Berklee Online

Music Business

Digital Handbook



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Welcome!

Whether you're looking to jumpstart your career, realize your artistic aspirations, or connect with a musical community, we're excited for you to study with us! Check out the lessons and features in this handbook, and learn how Berklee Online can help you pursue your passion and build your musical future.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'S. Hagon', set against the dark blue background.

Sean Hagon

Dean of Pre-College, Online, and Professional Programs

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How to Process Music Industry Data

By Liv Buli

From the Online Course
Data Analytics in the Music Business

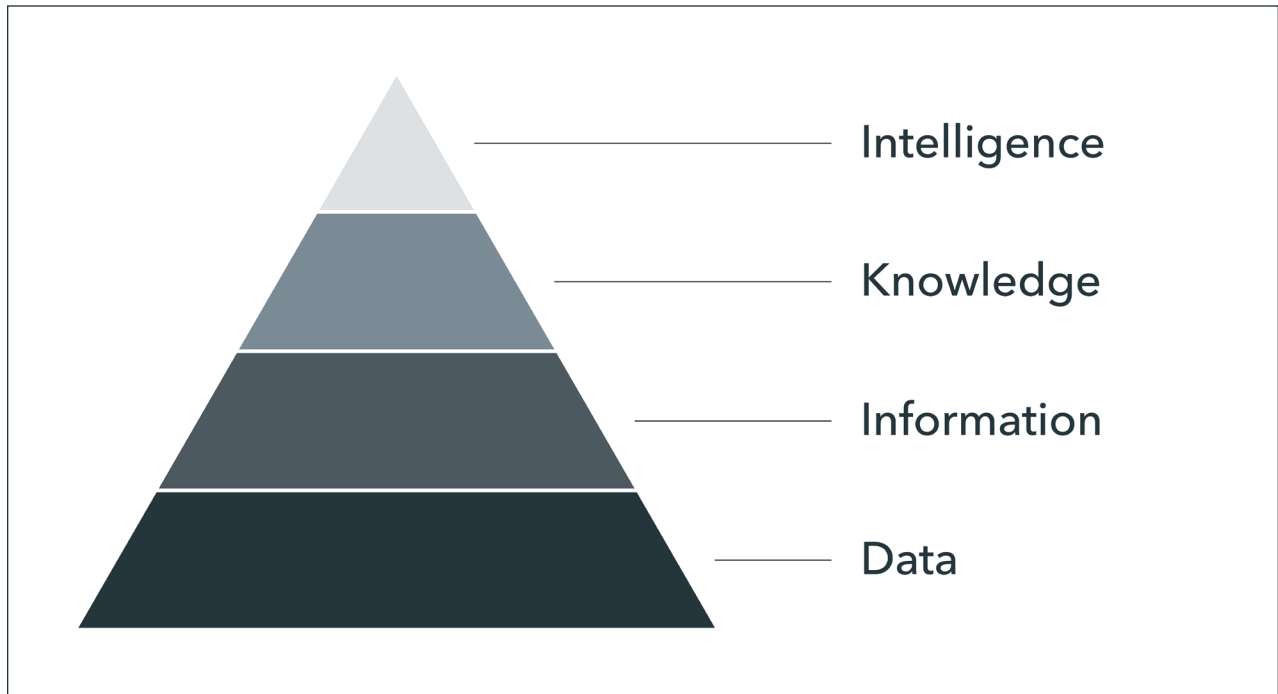
The end goal of working with data is to reach actionable insights and intelligent recommendations. In other words, we want to be able to use this data and information in a manner that allows us to confidently predict outcomes and take action based on what we think will happen. We want to reach larger audiences while spending less money, market our artists in the most efficient way possible, sell more albums, and rack up more streams. We can use data to get us there, but first we have to access and process that data responsibly.

Finding, cleaning, and storing data can be a daunting task. We need to begin by going over the fundamentals of how to think about data collection, and the intricacies we will need to consider as we compile our database (or that others have had to consider when compiling one for us).

Exactly how we get from unstructured data to actionable intelligence is presented in a simple (though surprisingly complex once you start digging in) chart known as the Data Pyramid.

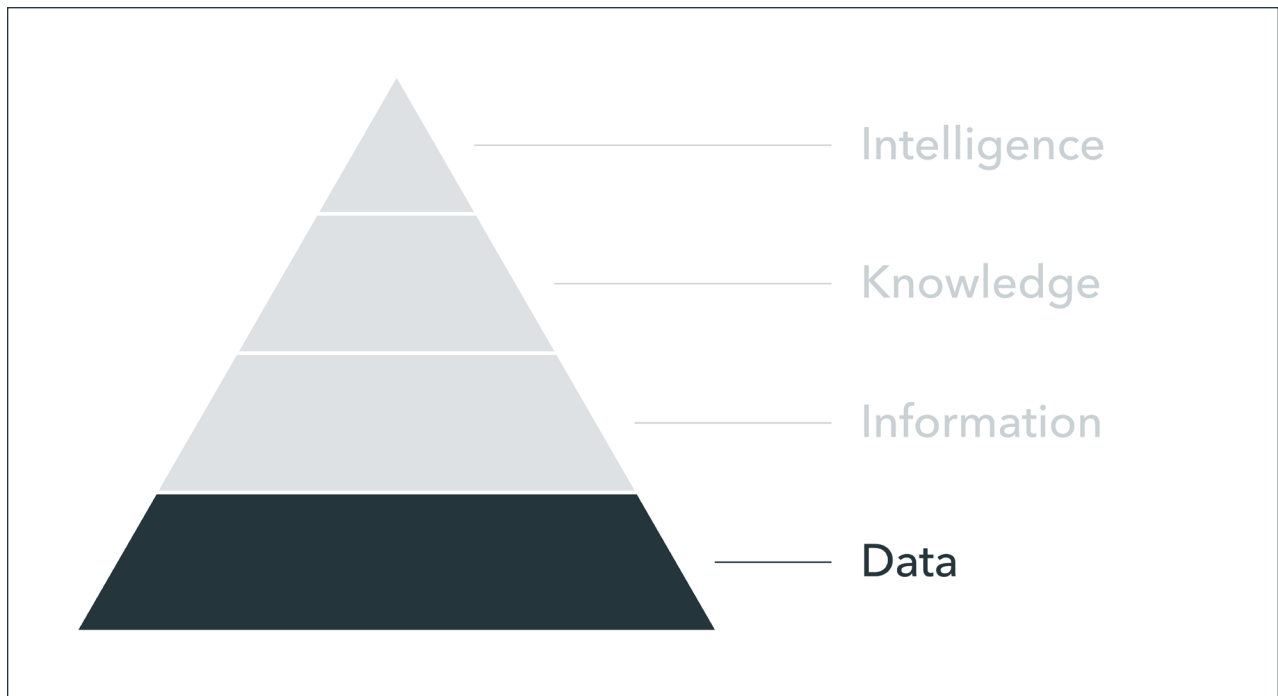
Thoughtful consideration of each layer—from the solid foundation of clean data to the difficult task of prescribing actions at the intelligence layer—is crucial to achieving accuracy. Let's get into it!

Meet the Data Pyramid



Each layer of the pyramid represents a stage in the analysis or application of data, from the raw data we start with (where we will inevitably spend most of our time), to the actionable insights we can derive once we arrive at the intelligence level. In order to truly understand its value as a framework, let's take a closer look at each individual layer and its meaning.

Data Layer



The fundamental bottom layer of the data pyramid is, perhaps unsurprisingly, data. At this point we are talking about how we collect unstructured, raw data points, and how we evolve that collection when DSPs (digital service providers, like Spotify, iTunes, etc.) or social networks become mainstream.

Let's not forget that MySpace was the most popular (legal) online network for music-sharing when companies like Next Big Sound

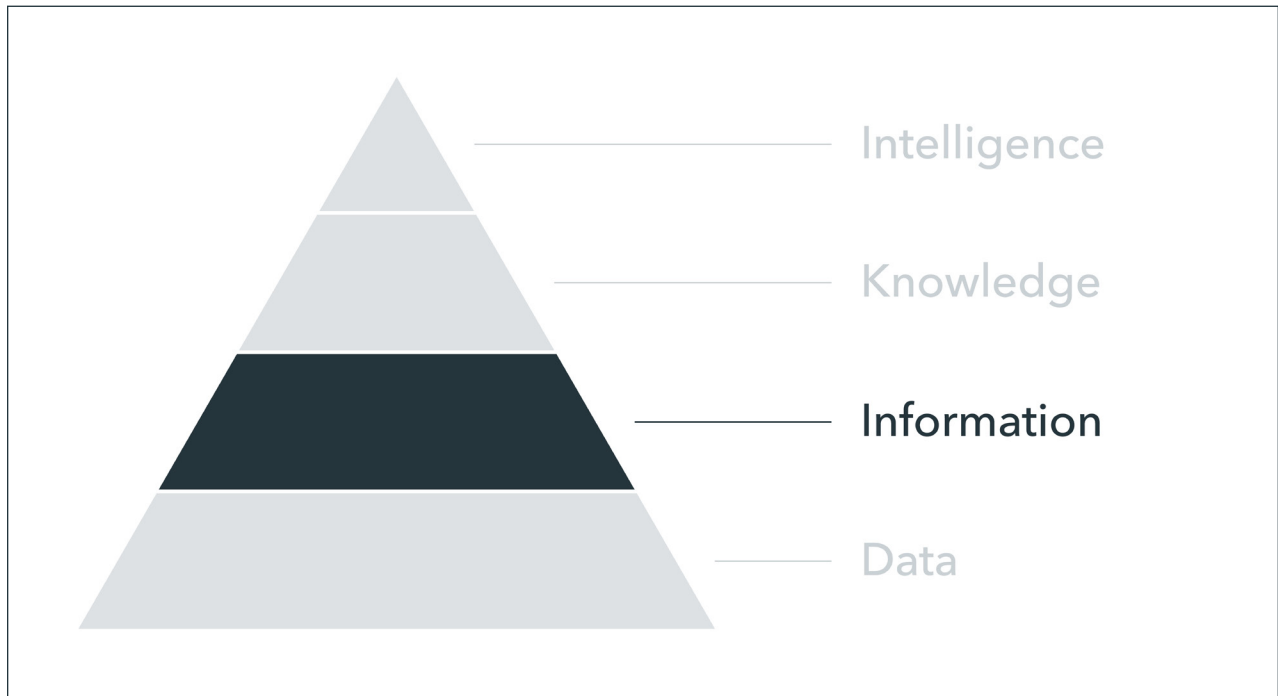
got their start, that Spotify only just launched in the US in 2012, and that Instagram only really took off as a platform for artists in 2015.

When we look at the music industry, we're generally talking about the following data:

- Artist or album endpoints, so Lady Gaga's Twitter handle and Facebook username
- Time-series data, i.e., Instagram likes over the past 30 days, etc.
- Event data, meaning album release dates or concert dates
- Metadata, for instance defining Lady Gaga as a female singer, genre: pop, label: Interscope

At this layer of the data pyramid, there is plenty of work to be done before we can move data up towards deriving information, knowledge, or intelligence. We'll learn more about the different raw forms of data we might dig up in the next topic.

Information Layer

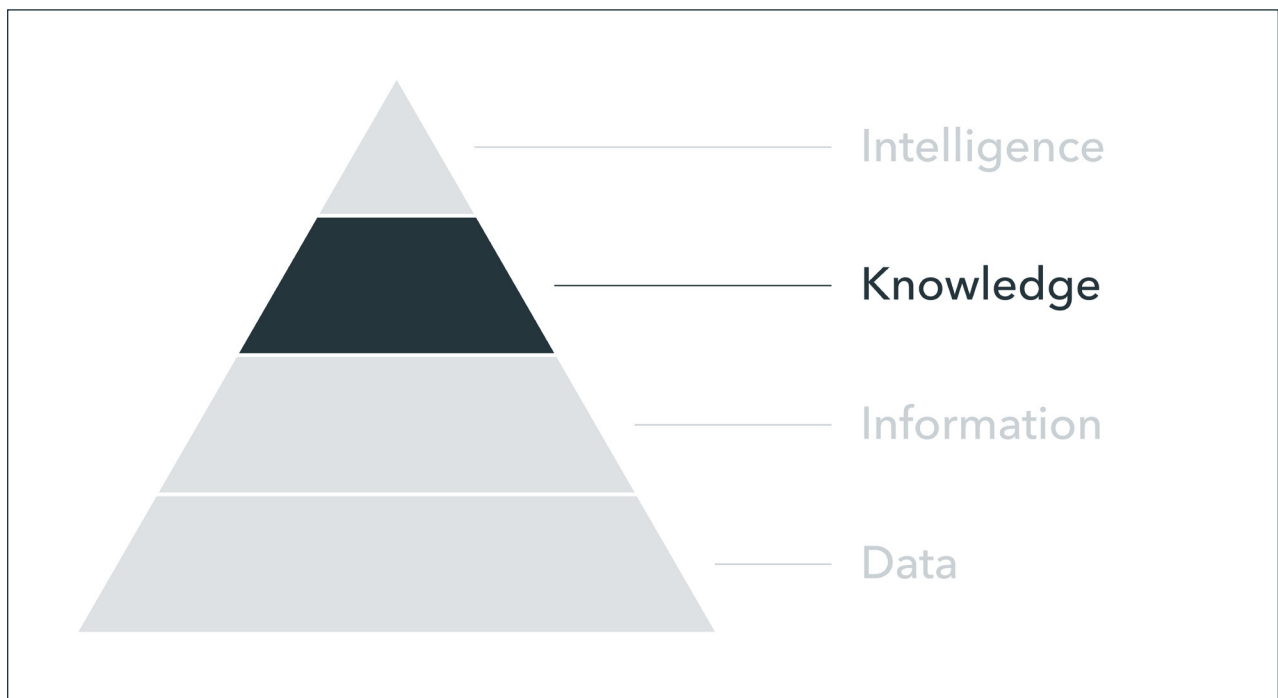


The next level of the pyramid is information. Here we are starting to talk about structuring our data, perhaps visualizing it in some graphical manner or performing cursory analysis in order to begin to understand what data we actually have, and find clues as to what value it might eventually have for our work. In other words: what questions we might be able to answer with it.

Platforms like Next Big Sound, Soundcharts, and others provide web applications that allow us to play around with our information layer

data. Alternatively, you can upload your raw data to an industry-agnostic tool like Tableau or Plot.ly. You can learn a lot from your data at this level, but making sense of our more structured data will require industry-specific knowledge and context.

Knowledge Layer



From information we derive knowledge, making our way up the data pyramid. It is the industry-specific context that will help us convert our information into knowledge. For instance: through setting

benchmarks and milestones that are unique to the music industry, within specific genres, or tailored to a particular label or artist.

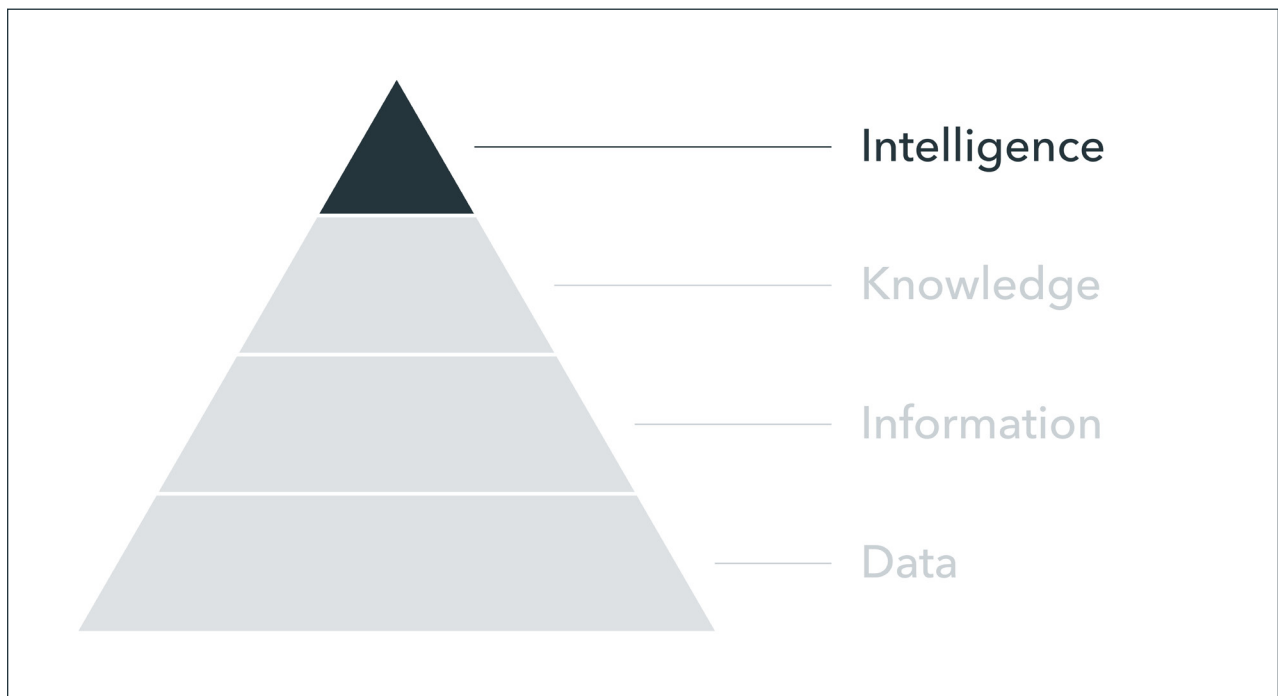
This descriptive, contextual information can be derived from our data, and lends itself to generalized insights about the environment an artist is working within. For instance, we can study the data of thousands of artists who have performed on late-night television shows and understand what impact that tends to have on online engagement, whether it varies from show to show, and what point in the artist's development is ideal for a performance of this sort.

During my tenure at Next Big Sound we spent a significant amount of time learning from users what context they would typically apply to their analysis, and aimed to build data-driven benchmarks and valuable groupings such as “artist stages” in order to meet these needs. It doesn't make sense to compare performance for your indie artist to that of Beyoncé, unless you are looking to demoralize and disappoint.

Keep in mind that this does not mean we can prescribe an action and know exactly what the outcome will be for your artists. We cannot say that if your artist with x number of followers performs

on *Jimmy Fallon*, they are going to sell x number of albums. We can say, however, that artists of this size have, on average, sold x number of albums after performing on *Jimmy Fallon*. You can use this information to benchmark performance and set expectations.

Intelligence Layer



The top tier of the pyramid, intelligence, is relevant when we are able to be more prescriptive with our analysis, but this is also a far riskier endeavor, as we often have to make high-stakes decisions.

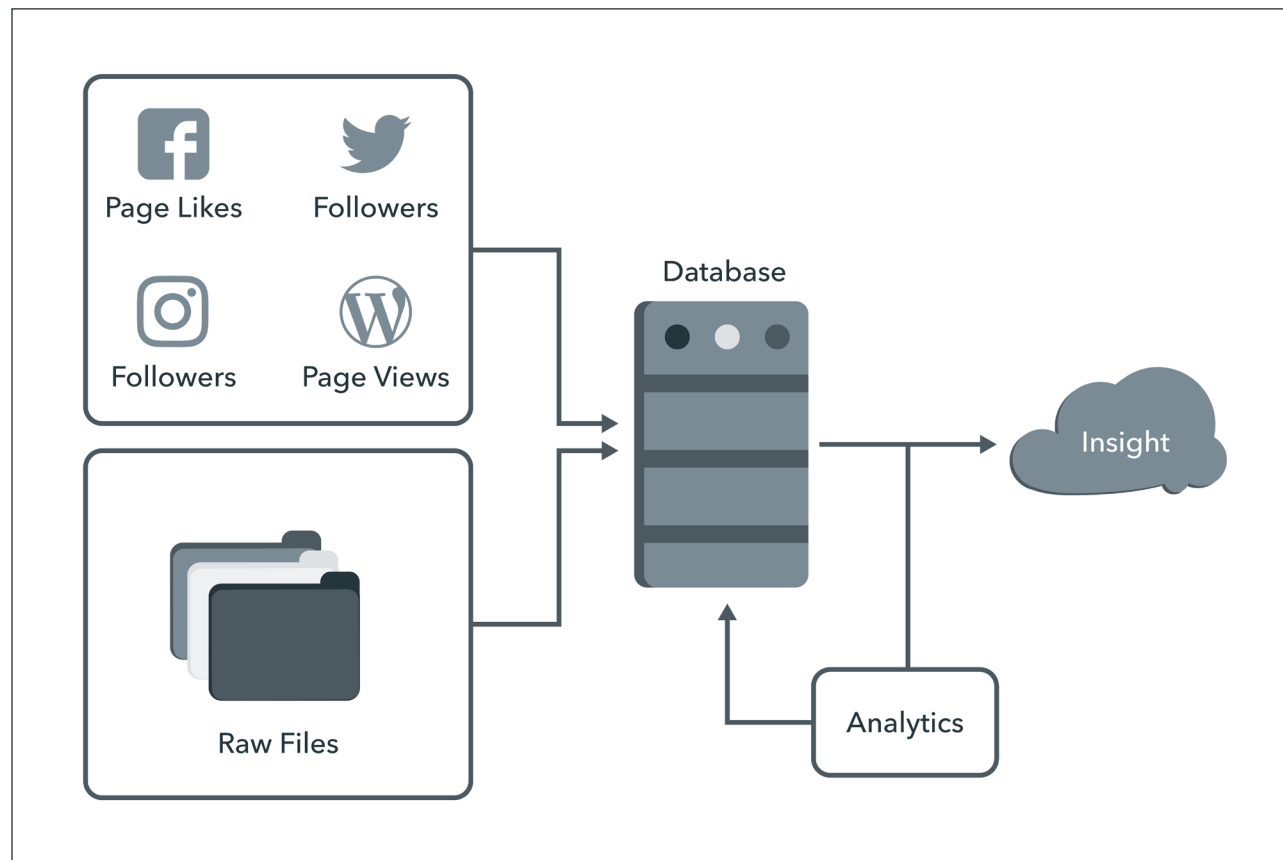
The intelligence layer indicates that we are able to predict outcomes and recommend actions with a high level of confidence. This high level of confidence is extremely important as we are talking about prescribing specific actions in business decisions that can be worth millions of dollars, if not more: which artist to sign, when to release music for maximum impact, whether to send an artist on an arena tour. It can be very expensive to make the wrong prediction.

It should almost go without saying that fundamental to all of this is clean and accurate data. You can't build valuable charts, reasonable benchmarks, or accurate predictions if your data is corrupted or lacking in some way. And believe me, you are about as likely to find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow as you are to find a clean and consistent raw set of data.

This is why we will spend the majority of our time at the data layer, familiarizing ourselves with the data and its characteristics, thinking about how best to structure this data, and searching for any inconsistencies or inaccuracies that will snowball into bigger problems later. Let's take a closer look at what that raw data might look like.

The Trouble with Data

Below is a high-level overview of what it looks like when a platform like Next Big Sound collects and processes data that's both public (Facebook page likes, Wikipedia page views, etc.) and proprietary (Point of Sale, ticket sales), and ultimately delivers insights back to users. The whole process would be fairly straightforward if only the raw files that we import into a database were clean and consistent.



Unfortunately, that's rarely the case. Let's look at how we imagine data will be presented:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Date	Artist Name	Pandora Spins	Facebook Page Likes	Twitter Mentions	Wikipedia Page Views	Concert	News & Blog Mentions	New Release	Revenue
2/1/2017	Beyoncé	123,456	87,249	359,088	596,267	Yes	173	No	\$153,678.00
2/2/2017	Beyoncé	125,677	87,657	359,496	596,675	No	147	No	\$156,033.00
2/3/2017	Beyoncé	128,900	88,920	360,759	597,938	No	849	No	\$167,903.00
2/1/2017	Ed Sheeran	23,456	5,623,123	5,624,340	5,721,885	No	489	No	\$346,777.00
2/1/2017	Ed Sheeran	23,678	5,789,764	5,790,981	5,888,526	No	490	No	\$377,000.00
2/3/2017	Ed Sheeran	23,890	6,032,242	6,033,459	6,131,004	No	190	No	\$390,000.00
2/1/2017	Chance The Rapper	45,679	2,345,678	2,802,470	47,992	No	48	No	\$30,444.00
2/2/2017	Chance The Rapper	45,987	2,378,907	2,835,699	48,300	No	19	No	\$47,393.00
2/3/2017	Chance The Rapper	46,356	2,456,098	2,913,890	48,669	Yes	10	No	\$59,223.00

Now let's see how data is usually presented:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Date	Artist Name	Pandora Spins	Facebook Page Likes	Twitter Mentions	Wikipedia Page Views	Concert	News & Blog Mentions	New Release	Revenue
2/1/2017	Beyoncé	123,456	87,249	359,088	596,267	Yes	173	?	?
2/2/2017	Beyoncé		87,657	359,496		No	147	?	?
2/3/2017	Beyoncé ft. Jay-Z		88,920	360,759		No	849	?	?
2/1/2017	Ed Sheeran			2,217		?	489	No	\$346,777.00
2/1/2017	Ed Sheeran	23,678		2,217		?	490	No	?
2/3/2017	Ed Sheeran	23,890		2,217	6,131,004	?	190	No	\$390,000.00
2/1/2017	Chance The Rapper	45,679	2,345,678	2,802,470	47,992	No	48	?	\$30,444.00
2/2/2017	Chance Rapper	45,987	2,378,907	2,835,699	48,300	No	19	?	\$47,393.00
2/3/2017	Chance The Rapper	46,356	2,456,098	2,913,890	48,669	Yes	10	?	?

As we learned when reviewing the data pyramid, we know that if we process data that is rife with inconsistencies and issues, we will ultimately end up delivering insights that are inherently flawed.

Common Issues with Music Industry Data

Some of the common issues we might come across with music industry data include:

Data is Simply Missing or Doesn't Update

- Looking at a data set we will often find unpopulated cells. Assuming we are collecting data daily, one reason for this could simply be that not all artists are seeing activity every day.
- For instance, a new band playing local shows and just getting their start is not likely to see consistent activity on social media. No activity, no data.
- In fact, looking across all artists, the average number of new Facebook page likes is less than one.
- Alternatively, did your data indexer break or fail in some manner?

An Artist Changes Their Social Handle or Username

- As mentioned earlier, artist and album endpoints are an important data source in the music industry.
- What happens when Phoebe Bridgers changes her Twitter handle from @_fake_nudes_ to @phoebe_bridgers?
- If we are hitting the endpoint “twitter.com/_fake_nudes_,” attempting to collect data for Phoebe Bridgers, we are suddenly unable to collect time-series data for the artist.
- Unless the switch is highly publicized, it can take a while to notice and update the artist endpoint, as a result we will be missing data unless we can access a historic record and backfill.

The Characteristics of Your Data Can Be Confusing

- Different data is available in different formats and over different periods of time.
- Are we looking at deltas or totals? Is the value you are collecting an updated tally of 100 million followers in total, or 200,000 new followers added today?

- For instance, Facebook page likes are reported on the Facebook Application Programmable Interface as totals; Facebook PTAT (People Talking About This) is reported as a rolling average of the last seven days.

Are Network-Wide Spikes and Dips Accurate?

- Occasionally, you may come across massive spikes or dips in data.
- These can be network-wide, or for a specific group of artists.
- Has the network updated the way they report data? During the “great Instagram purge” of 2015, the platform shut down a whole slew of spam accounts in a single day, causing poor Justin Bieber to dip below a billion followers (as well as a massive dip in deltas across the majority of artists on the platform).
- In fact, the top artists on various networks tend to be “losing” followers on a daily basis as they consistently work to clear out spam accounts across platforms.
- Or has a widely publicized industry event like the Grammys caused a legitimate spike in activity?
- Did P. Diddy just buy a bunch of Twitter followers? Is TIDAL fudging play counts? Did Kanye delete his account again?

Time-Related Issues

- Have you considered for which timezone you are collecting data, and whether this is consistent across sources? Does your data source update at a certain time of day?
- There are several reasons why the solution is not simply to divide the weekly number by seven to get a daily count.
- Periodicity is one factor. For instance, Facebook could overall see more activity on Mondays.
- Weekly data reporting also makes it more difficult to capture the big events (assuming they happen on a single day) that drive sales and streams for an artist.

It is clear that industry-specific knowledge is extremely valuable in determining the quality and accuracy of your data. Often when these issues crop up, it will be the analyst's responsibility to uncover the cause and eventual remedy for messy data.

More and more resources are available for the data curious these days. Through a simple web search you may be able to track down .csv files of data sets that have already been compiled and are free

to use. It's possible to get raw files directly from the source such as the label or venue, but as an individual you're not likely to get access to proprietary info such as the data Sony stores in their "music data warehouse" unless you're a rights-holder. Labels like Sony will work with platforms like Next Big Sound to import proprietary data to view this in tandem with other sources of data, but the files can be messy. Your best bet is to crawl the web for available data on a per artist level and be open to getting your hands a little dirty.

Liv Buli is the author of the Berklee Online course from which this lesson comes. Read about her own musical background on the next pages, or learn more about the other lessons in this course by clicking the link below.

Want to explore this course even further?

[Learn More](#)



Instructor Spotlight:

Liv Buli

Liv Buli is a data journalist and author living in Olive, New York. Previously a senior music data journalist with Pandora Media and Next Big Sound, Liv has spent most of her career working at the intersection of storytelling, data science, and visualization, thinking about how best to tell stories with data and speaking at conferences around the world.

At Berklee Online, Liv authored the graduate course *Data Analytics in the Music Business*.

Is understanding music essential to succeed in the business?

No question. Take data analytics as an example. You could stare at the numbers all day long, but without the insight and knowledge of someone who understands the business, you won't know what questions to ask of the data.

Tell us about your musical background.

I've played the violin and sang since I was a little girl. What started out as squeaky violin recitals, grew to become touring Europe with my symphony orchestra, and a passion for music that led me to a career in the industry. I have two little girls who absolutely love to make music. We sing, dance, and play, and it is just the most delightful thing in the world!

If you were starting out now and you had to choose one area of the music business to start learning about, which area would you start with?

Look at your data. You want to understand how to market yourself? What works, what doesn't? All of that information is at your fingertips with data that is spit out on the other end of your content!



Tips of the Trade

5 Tips to SEO Your Next Band Name

By Heidi Patalano

Hypothetical band names get bandied about all the time in a musician's social spaces. How many times have you been in a conversation where someone strings together an odd combination of words, and somebody blurts out, "That'd be a great band name!"?

But how do you pick one you really want to live with for the lifespan of your band? And how do you pick one that sets you apart from the crowd? And, perhaps most importantly, how do you pick one that people will easily find when they type the name into a search engine? It's all about the SEO, baby!

Many bands have given themselves totally generic names, almost thumbing their virtual noses at the increasing necessity of standing out online. Take for example the inspiration for Panic! At the Disco, which took their name from another band's lyrics (not the Smiths' "Panic," but from the more exclamatory "Panic!" by an indie band with a generic moniker that is almost a commentary on searching online to find your band's name: Name Taken).

For some, it's quite straightforward: Vampire Weekend comes from a film project by lead singer Ezra Koenig. The Chainsmokers got their name from their favorite extracurricular activity. Band member Alex Pall told ABC News, "I enjoyed smoking weed and you know it was just like such a 'yeah the domain's open.' I don't have to have any like underscores."

And check out this one: 2 Chainz originally went by the name Tity Boi because he was a breastfed only child. He reportedly changed it to 2Chainz in homage to his love of jewelry and in order to be more “family friendly.”

If you find yourself having to come up with a name, take a few lessons from these successful acts’ stories as you consider what you want people to call you onstage. And consider these guidelines:

1. Avoid Generic Band Names

You know what SEO means, right? Search Engine Optimization: Optimize your band name for the search engines! Don’t pick something ungoogleable!

Sure, there are a bajillion exceptions to this rule. There’s the band Girls, and there’s Women, Tennis, Future, and Real Estate. Heck, there’s even an Oklahoma band called Various Artists. But as you’re starting out, one of the keys to building up a following is making it as easy as possible for new fans to find and follow you online after they’ve caught your act. So avoid choosing a single everyday word for your band name. And if you want a single-word band name,

swing the other way by choosing something less common. Take for example: Oxford, England-based Foals. They were reportedly named as such after a friend commented that they looked “like a bunch of foals, like stinky, smelly.”

2. Don't Get Too Creative with Your Spelling

Again, it's about being easy to find online. So, sure, misspelling on purpose didn't hurt Linkin Park — which was a riff on the name of a Santa Monica park near the studio where they recorded. And it didn't make any trouble for Lorde. Ella Marija Lani Yelich-O'Connor gave herself that name due to her fascination with aristocracy, adding the “e” to make it more “feminine.” The Weeknd's Abel Tesfaye misspelled his name simply to avoid getting mistaken/sued by Canadian band the Weekend. But overall it's best to keep your band name out of Wyld Stallyns territory.

Take Twenty One Pilots, for example: they don't get into funky spelling but the name stands out for specificity of their number. The name is a reference to *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller, a play in which a man dies by suicide after electing not to issue a recall on faulty

airplane parts that he manufactured, which in turn causes 21 pilots to die in flight. Bleak stuff, yes, but also memorable stuff.

3. Don't Riff on Another Band's Name

Okay sure, it's understandable if you're so inspired that you want to name your band Lizzo's Daughter because the "Juice" singer is your jam. However, marrying yourself to the legacy of another artist will seal an association you'll never be able to escape, whether or not you continue to embrace Lizzo as your central inspiration for years beyond or not. Instead, try taking inspiration from how your favorite artists approached naming themselves. Father John Misty's Josh Tillman said he chose his stage name after thinking of his favorite singers: "All my favorite singers have kind of showbiz names, like Nina Simone or Serge Gainsbourg or [Josh] Groban," he said, mentioning the last one in jest. But even the "God's Favorite Customer" artist ended up having regrets. He remarked that he "looks more like a 'Dr. Fun'... I regret every day of my life not going by 'Dr Fun.' I'd be on Good Morning America right now."

4. Use More Than One Word in Your Band Name

This is another way to increase the likelihood that you're found online when someone searches for you after they've caught your act. For example, Mike Hadreas' moniker Perfume Genius could've been Perfume. But thankfully, the Seattle artist added to it, without overdoing it. "It was just some random gibberish my friend came up with while we were watching the movie Perfume, starring Ben Whishaw," he told *Into the Gloss* in 2017. "I'm kind of glad—I think I would have picked something really pretentious if I would have thought about it too much."

5. Do Your Research

You love the band name you've come up with, and—amazingly all your bandmates agree on it, too. But before you commit, make sure that the domain name is free and that the name isn't already taken on sites like Bandcamp and Soundcloud. Belcalis Almanzar named herself after Bacardi rum. But the rapper who became Cardi B learned her lesson when she first attempted performing under a

famous name that was already taken. “You know what, my sister’s name is Hennessy, so everybody used to call me Bacardi,” she told Jimmy Fallon on The Tonight Show. “Then it was my Instagram name, Bacardi, Bacardi B. But for some reason, my Instagram kept getting deleted, and you know what, I think it was Bacardi that had something to do with it. So I just shortened it to Cardi B.”

These SEO-minded suggestions can help you to become more easily accessible for press coverage, as I’ve experienced in covering bands for a number of years as a journalist. However, every rule is also made to be broken. In contributing to a one-off album I went with the artist name of Black Bra. A lot of other results will come up when you plug those two words into a search engine!



Instructor Spotlight:

Tonya Butler

An educator, attorney, administrator, and motivational speaker, Tonya Butler is chair of the Music Business/Management department at Berklee College of Music. She spent 14 years as an entertainment attorney, working in-house for record and publishing companies and film studios. Her clients included Rhino Records, MGM Music, and Global Disc Records.

At Berklee Online, Tonya authored the graduate course *Music Business Management and Leadership*.

Who is someone in the music industry who you admire for making the most of their brand, from a business perspective?

I have a lot of respect and admiration for Lady Gaga. Her move into acting and fashion was brilliant.

What is the biggest lesson you learned the hard way in the music business?

The importance of reputation and integrity. The music business is actually a very small world. Although what you know and who you know are crucial, WHO KNOWS YOU and what they know about you is what will form the basis of your relationships in the industry moving forward.

If you could offer one piece of advice to a musician who is trying to become more business savvy, what would you say?

Educate yourself on what it takes to protect yourself and your music. The ability to make music is a gift, but the ability to make a living with your music is a skill.

Creating a Successful Marketing Campaign

By Mike King

From the Online Course
The Business of Music Marketing

When discussing the most important facets of marketing, we usually talk about goals, strategy, tactics, identifying who you want to talk with, and creating a funnel to measure success. However, a more complete framework, starting from the top, would need to include the following:

The Big Idea

What is it you want to do and what are your goals? Are you working to launch a new artist's career, or are you interested in starting a new music management company? What are you working to do, and how will you measure success?

Market Research

Once you know what you want to accomplish, determining the opportunities in the market are critical. First-mover advantage (being the first to create something in a particular market) means there is less competition, but it also means you could have a more difficult time gaining traction for something consumers might be unfamiliar with. Gaining an understanding of potential market size for your idea, trends in the market, and buying habits of potential

consumers will all work towards validating your idea, as well as set the stage for creating the strategy for your marketing plan. For example, if your idea is to launch and market a physical vinyl-only store in Keene, NH, you would be well-served to understand the consumption habits of the local community, the number of potential consumers in the area, trends in vinyl, etc.

Competitive Analysis

Complementing the market research idea above, it's helpful to understand your competition as deeply as possible. Who else is doing what you want to do? How are they doing it? What opportunities are there for you to do it better? Understanding how your competition prices their offering, how they market, who they partner with, and how they brand what they are doing provides you with solid insight into how you can differentiate yourself. There are a wide array of tools and services available to help with determining what your competition is doing, and where they are spending their advertising dollars (which is the best indicator of what they are truly focused on).

Target Market

Knowing who your potential fans are, and targeting your marketing appropriately to reach those who are most predisposed to being open to your product is definitely a best practice. Segmenting your market and identifying appropriate outlets and techniques to reach the right folks allows you to be more efficient with your marketing effort and associated spend, and have the added layer of potentially delighting prospective consumers, as opposed to annoying those who have no interest, and will likely never have an interest, in what you are doing.

Positioning

Once you have a handle on the market and on any competition, you can work on positioning your product or service. Creating a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) based on opportunities you have discovered through your research, or through surveying existing consumers of your product or service helps to guide your marketing messages, images utilized, and overall strategy. Your marketing positioning and associated outreach should also include best practices with behavioral marketing techniques. Consumers are

motivated by any number of biases (confirmation bias, outcome bias, zero-risk bias, and more).

Strategy and Tactics

All of the above flows into creating your strategic and tactical marketing plan. Your strategy and tactics will include everything from the operational aspects (pricing, ecommerce and bundling options, website creation and visibility, etc.) to the platforms and methods you use to communicate, your social media plan, your acquisition techniques, your image and copy choices, content marketing, partnerships, paid and organic search techniques, and much more.

Budget

How much do you have, and what is the most appropriate way to spend? Online advertising provides marketers with the ability to adjust campaigns midstream based on results, and while it is important to align your marketing spend against specific goals, a marketing budget should be flexible to support changes in the market, testing, and optimization of efforts.

Data and Analysis

Liv Buli's lesson about Data Analytics in this handbook does a fantastic job of driving this point home in more detail than I will be able to here, but one of the most critical aspects of marketing is to effectively measure your efforts. Online endeavors provide marketers with a variety of tools to measure their effectiveness, and the cycle of marketing execution > testing variables > measuring results is a great way to ensure that you are on track with reaching the right people and validating your marketing assumptions.

Mike King is the author of the Berklee Online course from which this lesson comes. See why he thinks marketing is the most transferable skill on the next page, or learn more about the other lessons in this course by clicking the link below.

Want to explore this course even further?

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Instructor Spotlight:

Mike King

Mike King is a course author, instructor, and the Vice President of Enrollment at Berklee College of Music and Chief Marketing Officer at Berklee Online. Prior to working at Berklee, Mike was the Marketing/Product Manager at Rykodisc, where he oversaw marketing for artists including Mickey Hart, Morphine, Pork Tornado (Phish), and Frank Zappa's estate.

At Berklee Online, Mike authored *Music Marketing 101*, *Modern Music Marketing*, and *Music Business Trends and Strategies*.

Is understanding music essential to succeed in the business?

I don't think you need to be a musician, but I think that it is really helpful if you are a student of music.

Tell us about your musical background.

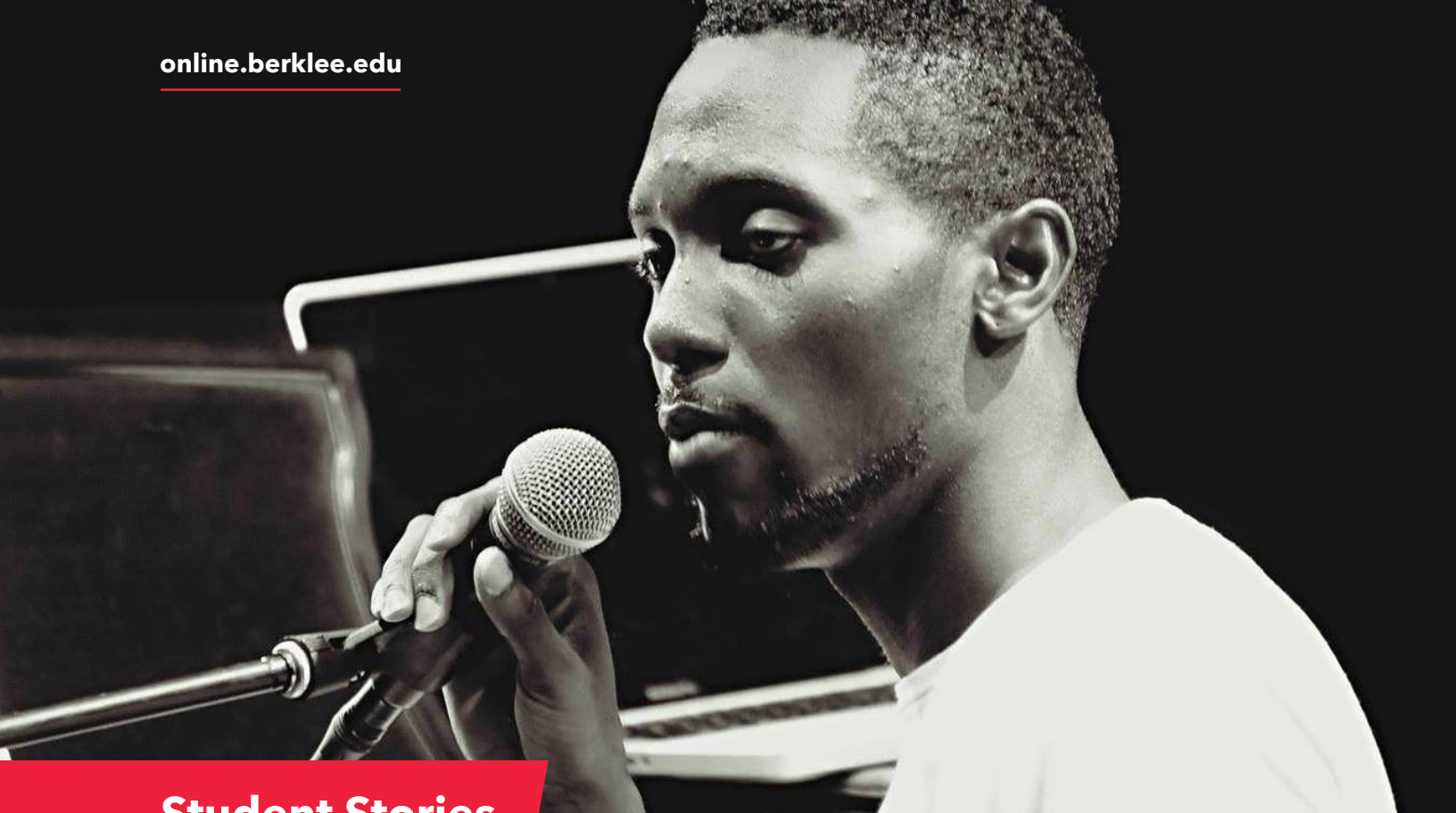
I've played guitar and bass for 25 years, but my interest is in learning and playing cover songs for the most part.

If you were starting out now and you had to choose one area of the music business to start learning about, which area would you start with?

Well, I am biased, but I think marketing is a transferable skill—the foundational aspects can be used no matter where you end up in the music business.

What advice do you give musicians who are trying to become more business savvy?

If you focus, actively search out information, and associate yourself with folks who have experience and know more than you do, you are going to do well in the music business.



Student Stories

Fighting for Family with Music Business

By Talia Smith

Jamelle Houston was three years old when he sat at his grandparents' piano at their home in Temple, Texas and struck a chord for the first time. In that moment, his family knew that he had a gift that runs in the family. His grandfather, John Wilson, was

a drummer in the 1960s Texas funk band, the Brothers Seven. He inspired Jamelle to become a musician, and is also the reason why he wants to pursue music law.

“It goes back to my grandfather and his group,” he says. “They have a song called ‘Takin’ Care of Business’ and we’ve always wondered ... I’m not saying nothing, but if you go and you listen to, ‘Takin’ Care of Business’ by Minnie Nelson and the Brothers Seven, and then you go and you listen to Bachman-Turner Overdrive. I just wonder sometimes, I’m going to leave it at that.”

Jamelle began the music business master’s program with Berklee Online to empower himself and others to protect their music and art. One day, he would like to create a documentary about the Brothers Seven and shine a light on his grandfather’s legacy, and the possible copyright infringement case.

“That really sparked something in me,” he says. “There are so many stories of that out there. And I just want to make sure that people have the knowledge and know this is what they should be doing as it relates to intellectual property.”

Jamelle has established his music career in LA and toured the world with various musical acts, but his roots are strong in his hometown of Temple, Texas, and he's very much invested in improving the town for the better. It's a place where he and his grandfather's musical endeavors began, a place he returns to each summer to give back through his nonprofit music camp, and a place that is currently grappling with racial injustice during the Black Lives Matter movement.

Jamelle moved to LA in 2011 to attend the Independent Artist Program at Musicians Institute, and attributes part of his success to the relationships that he's built with musicians in his community. As a session pianist and keyboardist, he went on to tour with acts such as Conrad Sewell and AJ Mitchell, performing on the *Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon* and the *Today Show*. He realized that Temple was lacking musical community and opportunities, so he took it upon himself to foster music and art in a town that truly needed it.

“In my hometown, there are just no opportunities for those young creatives,” he says. “You have baseball camps, soccer camp, every other camp, but you've got all these creatives that are just dying to get around other creatives. And I was just like, ‘I guess it's up to me.’”

In 2015, Jamelle established his nonprofit, the Academy of Art Music Performance and Dance (AAMP'D), where students can learn everything from songwriting to hip-hop, dance, theater, voice, photography, and more. Every summer, he goes back to Temple with his friends from LA to run the camp and teach the various courses.



In my hometown, you've got all these creatives that are just dying to get around other creatives. And I was just like, "I guess it's up to me."

- Jamelle Houston

Among the AAMP'D teachers are Jacob Lusk, a former *American Idol* contestant who now teaches voice; Justin Arrington, an artist who teaches contemporary dance; and Patrick Gamble (PatG), who teaches hip-hop. The camp caps at 100 students and Jamelle says that these students are quite literally amped up to get started every summer.

“When I tell you, they come ready, they’re like, ‘Hey Jamelle, you know, I sat at home last night, and I was thinking, on the chorus,’ I’m just like, ‘Okay! Let’s work,’” he says.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jamelle paused the 2020 program with plans to come back in 2021. He didn’t travel to Temple this summer for the first time in years, but his hometown has been on his mind, especially during the Black Lives Matter movement.

In December 2019, Jamelle’s friend Michael Dean was fatally shot in the head by former Temple police officer Carmen DeCruz after he was pulled over for a traffic stop. This summer, Dean’s family visited the White House with other parents of Black men who have been killed at the hands of police brutality. Jamelle says that what upsets him the most is that justice has not been served, which underscores the importance of the current movement.

“It’s been really hard because it just feels like the biggest coverup I’ve ever seen in my life, and Temple is a small community,” he says. “They’ve admitted, ‘We’ve never had anything like this happen. We don’t really know what to do, or how to do it,’ and I’m like, just do what’s right. That’s all we’re asking, that’s it.”

He says that this hit him personally, not only because Dean was his friend, but because Jamelle is a Black man in America himself.

“I have that story of being racially profiled and pulled over,” he says. “Put in handcuffs, just because you know, you fit the description. And I’m asking them, ‘Well, why was I pulled over?’ It hits close to home and people don’t realize it. That’s why I’m glad that there’s an awakening of what’s really going on. You really do, as a person of color, have to move about differently. It just is what it is.”

Although there is more progress to be made, Jamelle says it’s been amazing to see the support from around the world. As he begins his music business master’s program this fall, Jamelle is going to use his education to create more good in Temple and beyond, whether he’s fighting for his grandfather’s copyrights, providing children music education, or fighting for racial justice.

“I believe that we all have some level of influence and purpose as it relates to our gifts,” he says. “I would hope that my musical gifts and contribution to the world would influence and inspire other creatives to realize that there’s a world out there waiting on the gifts that you have to offer!”



Instructor Spotlight:

E. Michael Harrington

Dr. E. Michael Harrington is a professor of music copyright and intellectual property matters. He has worked as a consultant and expert witness in hundreds of copyright matters and has worked with Steven Spielberg, Tupac Shakur, Lady Gaga, and many others.

At Berklee Online, he authored *Music Business Law* and instructs *Music Licensing* and the *Music Business Capstone*.

Is understanding music essential to succeed in the business?

My understanding of music, especially as a music theorist, composer, and ethnomusicologist, has been central to my entrance into and continuance in the music and entertainment business.

If you were starting out now and you had to choose one area of the music business to start learning about, which area would you start with?

Copyright law, as this is the most important and only federal means by which music is respected and protected.

What's the biggest lesson you learned in the music business?

Get legal advice as needed. The “ask for forgiveness later” thought is wonderful EXCEPT in legal situations.

What advice do you give musicians who are trying to become more business savvy?

Surprise yourself—if you hate country music, study it. If you hate hip-hop, study it. If you hate classical music, study it.

Make Your Brand Work for You

By John Kellogg

From the Online Course
Music Business Revenue Streams

An artist’s brand represents how the artist is perceived by its audience. Branding is the pursuit of strengthening that perception which can lead to other revenue-generating activities for the artist from other companies or brands that desire to capitalize on the goodwill the artist’s brand engenders.

In the 1800s, cattlemen were the first to use the term “branding” when they used hot irons to burn their names or symbols on the hides of their stock to identify which cattle were theirs. As the industrial age matured, companies that mass-produced products also sought to both promote and distinguish their goods from others by affixing a visual mark to their goods. This allowed customers to feel secure in knowing they were purchasing items that were manufactured by reputable companies. In the early 1900s, Columbia was one of first record companies to affix labels with information on the artist as well as their logo on their recordings—a brand that became identifiable with quality recordings. Others like Decca and Okeh also prominently displayed their logos on record labels.

In the 1920s these labels became recognized as the leading companies offering the best in jazz and blues recordings and, as the popularity of records grew in the twentieth century, influential

independent labels like Motown and Atlantic grew into large concerns whose goodwill enabled them to launch sub-labels like Motown's Tamla, Soul, and Gordy, and Atlantic's ATCO and Elektra.

But consumer brands also impacted the music industry. The emergence of television in the early 1950s saw each building their shows like *The Maxwell House Concert*, sponsored by a coffee manufacturer. Companies began promoting their brands by purchasing airtime and creating shows featuring former radio stars who lent their popularity to promoting and/or endorsing the sponsor's products. The format morphed into 30-60-second commercials during network shows and music played a crucial role in the development of the networks thereafter.

Personal branding of performers became an important part of the music industry around the middle of the last century as artists carefully crafted the look and feel of their performances, wardrobe, marketing materials, and logos to enhance their popularity. Variety shows like *Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour*, a talent competition that set the stage for modern series like *American Idol*, featured musical talent like seven-year-old Gladys Knight, who won the competition in 1952. The *Milton Berle Show* and the *Ed Sullivan*

Show during the 1950s and 1960s routinely featured musicians on a weekly basis, enabling unknown talent to both make an impression on a national viewing audience and exploit their personal brands at the same time. Sullivan broke musical acts in a way that is hard to comprehend today: 60 million people watched Elvis Presley's first performance on the show in 1956, and 73 million people watched the Beatles' first performance on the show in 1964. Accordingly, music-minded TV shows began popping up: *American Bandstand*, *Upbeat*, *Shindig*, *Hullabaloo*, and *Hollywood A Go-Go*, to name a few.

Though musicians got involved in branding through endorsements from the advent of radio, Michael Jackson took it to a new level as he and his brothers signed a \$5M deal to appear in a Pepsi commercial in 1984. This type of branding partnership paved the way for artists (and brands) to continue to capitalize on popularity.

Since the beginning of the century, musical artists have not only appeared in commercials for products and services, but many have created artist-owned branded products and services. Artists like Jimmy Buffett created his restaurant chain, Margaritaville, and Sammy Hagar expanded his brand by launching his own tequila, Cabo Wabo. Brand partnerships between consumer product companies and artists have become the norm, with the likes

of Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, and Pharrell Williams assuming new titles and responsibilities with companies as brand ambassadors. Co-branding deals can provide artists with varied primary and ancillary revenues and benefits.

Let's take P. Diddy for example. Through his partnership with Cîroc vodka, he likely received primary revenue from appearance fees for promotion at co-branded company events, and he certainly received revenue from sales of Diddy-branded products. Ancillary revenue would be derived from merchandise with his name attached. The ancillary benefits of a partnership like the one between Diddy and Cîroc might include the following:

- Increased awareness of artist through ad buys by co-brand
- Goodwill created for artist's other brand activities (i.e., P. Diddy: Bad Boy Records, Sean Jean Clothing)
- Free products: Diddy likely has an unlimited supply of Cîroc and never needs to buy a bottle of vodka again

Sponsorship

Music has always been a major component of the advertising mix, with jingles, placement of both popular and unknown music in commercials on radio/TV, and the internet leading the way. Music has the undeniable power to connect and move people's emotions and, since the 1980s, the number of companies partnering with musical artists in advertising or sponsoring live musical events has grown exponentially. The use of the right song or recording in a company's commercial or the placement of advertising sponsoring a music event can create an impression that is unmatched and leads to a relationship-building connection with their consumer.

New artists often expect their labels to provide tour support—money to cover tour expenses that exceed the gross revenue generated from a tour. However, any amounts paid by the label are considered an advance and therefore are recoupable from the artist's royalties. In such an instance, artists may seek additional revenue to offset elaborate production costs and/or earn a profit on their tours from lucrative sponsorship deals that assist the artist in both gaining additional exposure and generating non-traditional revenue.

In today's business, where millions of tracks are uploaded every day to sites like SoundCloud, artists must also find new ways to stand out in the cluttered environment and brands often seek artist "partners" to help them create compelling content, increase the brands' relevance, and affect a special connection with their consumers. But gone are the days when brands just want to sponsor a tour. They now desire more involvement in integrated campaigns that traverse tours and include philanthropic endeavors, business, public relations, and social media activities of their artist partners.

Brands that sponsor live music events receive great benefits from that affiliation as an AEG Presents survey indicates:

- 58 percent of attendees of events say they are more likely to trust a brand that is associated with a live music experience
- Eight of 10 millennials feel the most effective way to connect with them is through live music
- 93 percent of millennials prefer brands that sponsor live events
- 43 percent are more likely to make a purchase at a concert

Because of its unique ability to offer a brand the opportunity to develop a special relationship with its customers through multiple channels, Live Nation has experienced double-digit year-over-year growth as high as 20 percent in the high-margin sponsorship sector. Live Nation offers brands the ability to not only connect through signage at venues, but also links through their websites (i.e., Live Nation and Ticketmaster) to gather other vital data on the audiences that attend their events. Its partnership with Cisco to create “smart venues,” with Wi-Fi connectivity at several of its sites, enables Live Nation to interact with concertgoers connected to the company’s app and collect information on ticket and concession purchases, which can help build data for targeting brand messages.

AEG Presents has also entered into wide-ranging, multi-million dollar deals with sponsors that encompass events, concerts, and brand activation at some of its venues and even a lottery ticket sponsorship from a few state lotteries.

Endorsements

When a brand’s logo appears on a sponsored concert advertisement or a product is branded on an artist’s Facebook post of their concert

footage, the brand is merely associating their brand with the artist in a broad, passive way. The artist may not be vouching for the product's reputation for quality. However, a testimonial offered by an artist in the form of an endorsement takes the relationship to another level. In that case, it is incumbent on musicians seeking endorsement deals to align themselves with companies whose brand they use and who have values and ideals similar to their own.

Up and coming musicians (as well as many who are already established) who have acquired a notable following may receive offers from guitar, drum, or microphone manufacturers to endorse their products in exchange for cash payments, reduced priced, or free equipment. This sort of practice has gone on since the beginning of the sale of recorded music, and has involved many of the biggest names in music from every era, as well as many highly-sought-after session and touring musicians.

Some notable examples of artists and their endorsement deals include John Lennon and Rickenbacker guitars, Questlove and Ludwig drums, Joe Bonamassa and Gibson guitars, and Gail Ann Dorsey (David Bowie, Gwen Stefani) and Ampeg bass amps.

In these types of deals, the endorsing musicians may be required to: appear in advertisements; use the gear during performances; appear at clinics featuring the gear; and promote the gear in social media posts, on websites, etc. This type of arrangement works to the advantage of such artists by reducing their costs of purchasing equipment, thereby increasing their net revenue. Superstars are also sought for endorsements for all types of products and, while these deals may be lucrative, they do require an artist to stand behind the brand's product both in public and behind the scenes.

Brand Partnerships

Partnering with brands to raise an artist's profile and/or create awareness of new musical offerings has become a big part of many artists' marketing plans. But that wasn't always the case. In the early 1970s, singer-songwriters in particular, and self-contained bands in general, didn't want to have anything to do with "commercializing" their music by having it used or connected with a commercial brand's products or services.

Bob Dylan, the 1960s anti-establishment/protest music singer/songwriter decried and forbid his music from being used for

commercial marketing in the last century, only to embrace the concept in the new millennium by allowing use of his music in ads for Apple, Victoria's Secret, and even a supermarket chain.

Artists and brands have entered into a new era of mutual respect for how the other may influence the public's perception of their mutual brands. Artists view having their music in used advertising as a means of creating awareness and developing closer relationships with new and old fans, while some companies believe assisting musicians in their pursuit of their art will not only promote their business, but create goodwill with their customers.

John Kellogg is the author of the Berklee Online course from which this lesson comes. Find out who he looks up to in the music business on the next page, or learn more about the other lessons in this course by clicking the link below.

Want to explore this course even further?

[Learn More](#)



Instructor Spotlight:

John Kellogg

John P. Kellogg, Esq., is the former Chair of the Music Business/Management department at Berklee College of Music and an entertainment attorney. He has represented Levert, the O’Jays, Eddie Levert, Sr., LSG, Stat Quo of Shady/Aftermath Records, and G-Dep of Bad Boy Records. He also served as general counsel for the late R&B recording star Gerald Levert.

At Berklee Online, John is the director of the Music Business master’s program and authored three music business courses.

Is understanding music essential to succeed in the business?

Absolutely! It feeds your desire to conduct business in a way that leads to the betterment of the music industry in general.

Who do you admire for making the most of their brand?

Jay-Z who has been successful in so many categories of business.

If you were starting out now and you had to choose one area of the music business to start learning about, which area would you start with and why?

Copyright. It's the most valuable asset in the music business. Songs are the foundation of the music business. It all starts with a song and currently their value is skyrocketing.

What advice do you give musicians who are trying to become more business savvy?

Read periodicals like the *Wall Street Journal* and *Billboard* to stay abreast of trends and innovative developments in the entertainment business.



Tips of the Trade

How to Turn Your Band into a Business

By Leah Waldo

Thinking about your band or music as a business venture may make you feel a bit uneasy, but if you're an independent artist, thinking this way can put you on the path towards a sustainable music career and enable you to do more of what you love: Creating music!

In my new free massive open online course on Coursera, *Navigate the Music Business as an Independent Artist*, I share five tips for turning your band into a business. Read on for an overview and learn how to make the most out of your music.

Please note: *The information shared here refers to the United States only, and is meant as a supplement to professional legal advice. Check your local laws and tax code for information that is specific to your area, and consider seeking professional consultation from a legal expert.*

1. Incorporate as an LLC

An LLC, or limited liability company, is a corporate structure where the members of the company cannot be held personally liable for the company's debts and liabilities. Let's say you and your band get into some legal trouble—for example, a venue is suing you for allegedly damaging some of their equipment. And let's say you lost the court case and owe that venue money. If you have not incorporated as an LLC, you can be held personally liable—meaning, the venue can go after your personal assets such as a car, house, or any personal savings accounts. If you have incorporated as an LLC, then that venue can only go after any assets owned by

that LLC (which probably isn't much if you're just starting out). Incorporating as an LLC is essential for legally protecting yourself and your bandmates.

A note to songwriters: You may not need an LLC, but you should absolutely register a publishing company. Why? As John Kellogg says, "Every time music gets played, somebody gets paid." You want to ensure that somebody is you.

As a songwriter, when you register with a performing rights company (BMI, ASCAP, or SESAC), you're entitled to the writer's share of the royalty for a song, which is 50 percent. That other 50 percent goes to the publisher. If you are an indie songwriter and are not affiliated with any publisher, you're essentially leaving that other 50 percent on the table. If you incorporate as your own publishing company and then register your songs as the publisher with the performing rights company, then you'll receive the full 100 percent of the royalties owed.

Registering a publishing company is really easy. Simply go to your local City Clerk's office and request to fill out a Business Registration form. Complete the form, pay a small fee (usually

no more than \$80), and voila! You're officially the founder and president of a new publishing company. Finally, you'll need to register your new publishing company with your performance rights organization (PRO) and list your publishing company as the publisher for your songs.

Last but not least, there is one other major benefit to incorporating: You can open a corporate bank account. Having a corporate bank account that manages all of your band expenses will make managing your money and filing taxes much clearer—that way, you're not intermingling your personal and professional expenses.

2. Bandmates: Employees or Contractors?

Either way, you should absolutely have your bandmates fill out the appropriate tax forms. Why? Well, let's say your band makes \$10,000 in one year. You, being the generous and benevolent bandleader that you are, decide to pay your bandmates \$8,000 of that total \$10,000. When it's time to do your taxes, you are required to report that \$10,000 as income. However, you can also report your expenses,

including salary (for employees) or contractor fees (for independent contractors). These expenses are deducted from the total amount of money you owe taxes on. So, since you paid your bandmates \$8,000, you'll only owe taxes on \$2,000 (because $\$10,000 - \$8,000 = \$2,000$). Again, make sure you have your bandmates complete the appropriate tax forms. You'll need these so that the IRS can confirm that you're not lying about your expenses.

So, what are these forms? You'll need different forms depending on whether your bandmates are employees or independent contractors. An employee fills out a W4 and an independent contractor fills out a W9. The main difference between the two is that employees have taxes withheld from their paychecks (federal, state, local, etc.) whereas independent contractors do not and are required to pay their own taxes. Be aware that if you do not manage your taxes properly, or if you categorize your bandmates incorrectly, you may be audited and charged fees by the IRS.

To learn more about this process and decide which forms to give your bandmates, visit the IRS's website at **www.irs.gov**.

3. Keep Track of Your Income

When you're gigging and touring and money is flying all over the place, it can become difficult to keep track of how much you're bringing in. It's important to keep track of your income because, again, at the end of the year, it'll be time to do those taxes.

If you overreport how much money you brought in, you'll be paying too much in taxes, which is not fun for anyone. But, on the flip side, if you underreport how much money you're bringing in, you won't be paying enough in taxes and could incur fees later. You could get into some serious trouble with the IRS, even if it is an honest mistake. Here are some ways you can keep track of your income:

- Keep an income journal. Every time you get paid, create an entry.
- Keep an online ledger that is saved in the cloud so you can access it from anywhere.
- Download a money management app to help you keep track of income.

4. Keep Track of Your Expenses

We talked about subtracting the amount you pay to your bandmates from your total income. You can do the same with business-related expenses, such as sound equipment, recording software, gas to and from gigs, even guitar strings. These expenses are called “write offs.” As a business, you’re able to “write off” these expenses from your yearly income, thus lowering the amount you’ll owe taxes on. There is one small catch: To “write off” an expense, you’ll need to keep your receipt. Here are some helpful tips:

- Designate a special slot in your wallet just for business-related receipts and empty them into a safe file at home. File them regularly because the ink will fade if kept in a wallet for too long!
- If you’re *really* organized, keep a ledger of your expenses and update it weekly (a little time now saves *a lot* of time later).
- When paying your bandmates, use an app like Venmo to help you easily keep track of how much you’ve paid them.

5. Meet with a Certified Public Accountant (CPA)

Although I've listed this as Tip No. 5, it really should be at the top of the list. If you're ever confused about your finances or taxes, don't just wing it and hope for the best. Take the time to meet with a CPA. They will be able to answer all of your questions and also share additional tips and tricks to help you manage your finances effectively. They're experts when it comes to the tax code and will be able to help you file your taxes correctly. And should the need arise, they'll also be able to help you through an audit from the IRS.

If you'd like to learn more about navigating the music industry as an independent artist, including how to manage a band, planning and recording a record, and launching and running a successful crowdfunding campaign, check out *Building Your Career in Music: Developing a Brand and Funding Your Music*, my free four-week Berklee Online course on Coursera!

Figuring out how to turn your band into a business can sound scary, but it's actually pretty easy. Now more than ever, indie artists

need to be financially literate and these tips will help you on your way. I started with just a guitar and gas money and now I'm able to independently fund my projects solely with the revenue I generate from my music. A few of the accomplishments I'm most proud of being able to finance: recording in Nashville with producers Caleb Gilbreath and Eddie Bayers (with some help from some of the top players in town); hiring a marketing and PR team (who help me craft the "story" of each new release and alert the media about them), and shooting quality music videos and visual content (check out my **Instagram** and **Facebook!**).

World-Class Courses

With Berklee Online, you have more than 200 courses to choose from, including more than 30 music business courses. Here's a look at some selected offerings:

- **Music Business 101** [↗](#)
- **Music Licensing** [↗](#)
- **Music Business Trends and Strategies** [↗](#)
- **Legal Aspects of the Music Industry** [↗](#)
- **Music Business Finance for Entrepreneurs** [↗](#)
- **Artist Management in the Music Business** [↗](#)





Instructor Spotlight:

Jamal Dauda

Jamal Dauda currently serves as the Vice President of Content Marketing at *Playboy*. Prior to that, he was the Global Head of Music at WeTransfer and Artist Marketing Manager at Red Bull. Recognized in 2018 as one of *Adweek's* Creative 100, he has spearheaded branded film projects with Björk, Courtney Barnett & Kurt Vile, Zola Jesus, Fleet Foxes, and many others.

At Berklee Online, Jamal authored and instructs the graduate course *Music Marketing: Strategy for Consumer Brands*.

Is understanding music essential to succeed in the business?

I think both sides benefit from understanding the other, as they are inextricably linked and dependent on each other. The way we build businesses and support structures in music should be in service of the needs of musicians.

Who do you admire for making the most of their brand?

Cardi B. I think whenever you can find consistency in message and what connects you to a fanbase, while still growing in your craft, that's a winning combination.

What's the biggest lesson you learned in the music business?

No matter where you sit in the music industry, integrity, innovation, and the drive to keep doing the work are key to continued success.

What advice do you give musicians who are trying to become more business savvy?

Find mentors in every area. You would be amazed what you can learn in a phone call or a coffee hang.

Convergence and the Flood of Media Content

By Jeanine Cowen

From the Online Course
*New Media Economics: Music, Mobile,
Gaming, and Online Markets*

Creative individuals have long partnered with business entities, financial firms, publishers, and distributors at a multitude of stages within the content creation process. It is only in the past few decades that it has become easier for artists to create an independent path through the maze of crafting a fiscally sustainable career. But easier does not always mean better, for every artist. Understanding the ebb and flow of market strategies and alternative finance models is requisite knowledge for creative individuals working in the new media economy.

No longer do the firms producing and distributing media content have the sole voice in how that content is supplied to audiences. Narrow or misguided distribution plans can too easily miss intended audiences and potentially doom that particular content to obscurity.

Convergence

Through convergence, potential content consumers now have more than one way to access the same content and experience it, whether it be in a large media room or on a small, personal mobile device. And whether your content is text, video, or any other medium, the most important rule is that your content had better be engaging.

Challenges

The array of devices and online platforms mean that content suppliers must take these modes of distribution into account during the production phase. Media firms need to proactively produce content with those end experiences in mind. Missteps here can turn away a loyal audience, pushing them to seek other alternatives.

Opportunities

Convergence now enables firms to reach potential audiences that they may not have had access to through traditional mediums. Convergence also allows potential audiences to experience more than one content option, where traditional media distribution methods required audiences to make choices based on programming schedules.

But traditional firms have also realized the flexibility of new media platforms as avenues to reintroduce or revive older content. The digital remastering, reformatting, and repurposing of pre-existing content has allowed media firms to re-introduce material to the marketplace.

Such activities greatly extend a media material's longevity and its potential for generating additional revenues. For example, with on-demand firms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime providing 24-hour access to many types of movie and series genres including classics, younger audiences can easily binge on iconic television series from past decades such as *Friends*, *The X-Files*, and *Battlestar Galactica* (both the original and remake series).

Partnerships vs. Independence

While digital convergence has, in many cases, made the actual production of content easier, there are no guarantees of success with consumers. Depending on target audiences and intended markets, the production and distribution of media content can be financially risky. Depending on the size and scope of the project, accessing the value of potential partners is one way to reduce and spread some of this exposure.

Easier Is Not Always Better

As emerging technologies have lowered entry barriers for most media and entertainment sectors, the balance between cost and quality has become more apparent. Lower cost equipment and

tools may provide that initial entry and introduction of creative intent, but the varying levels of digital quality available often affect the consumer experience. For example, costs for broadcast news collection and reporting have been greatly reduced as mobile reporters have begun using cellular technology for live transmissions. However, the quality and reliability of these cellular feeds is contingent on network availability and strength at the point of origin. Consumers often experience buffered, choppy, or low-resolution reports as well as dropped transmissions during live news broadcasts.

Expertise vs. DIY

Having access to cheaper equipment and easy-to-use software doesn't ensure the success of a media project. Expertise in the creation, design, and development of a media form will greatly enhance its potential to reach the appropriate audience.

Financially stronger firms may be able to leverage greater technological assets like special effects and sound design to produce richer media content. Think about content that you engage with as a consumer: It's one thing to satisfy your interests, but it has to really sizzle, if you're going to rave about it to a colleague.

DIY can be easy and inexpensive but generally involves an increased amount of trial and error. The learning curve is high but the end result can be successful in its own right. If you have a point to make, you know what you're talking about or writing about, and you have an innovative way of making that point, you can certainly get eyes on a DIY project with its charm. It's not as foolproof, but what's exciting about new media is that anything can go viral if the conditions are right.

Jeanine Cowen is the author of the Berklee Online course from which this lesson comes. See her advice for having a long term mindset in business on the next page, or learn more about the other lessons in this course by clicking the link below.

Want to explore this course even further?

[Learn More](#)



Instructor Spotlight:

Jeanine Cowen

Jeanine Cowen is a professor of film scoring at Berklee College of Music. She is an active composer, music producer, and technologist, working primarily with sound and music for visual media. Her compositions can be heard in *The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo*, the off-Broadway play *Rapt*, and the game *Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar*.

At Berklee Online, Jeanine authored the courses *New Media Economics* and *Professional Film Scoring Skills 1*.

Is understanding music essential to succeed in the business?

While it isn't absolutely necessary to be a musician in order to work in the music business, having a basic musical foundation does provide for a different perspective and lens to understand the creation process.

If you were starting out now and you had to choose one area of the music business to start learning about, which area would you start with?

Copyright is so important! As we have always known, the ownership of intellectual property rights is one of the most powerful levers to have success over time.

What advice do you give musicians who are trying to become more business savvy?

When you make business decisions, try to step back and consider the more long term impacts beyond a few months and into several years. Do your research; if you don't understand something, ask for clarification and seek outside advice.



Celebrity Interview

From Merch Seller to Music Supervisor

By Pat Healy

Janet Billig Rich started in merch sales, which grew to an internship at Caroline Records (where she signed Hole), which led to a career in management (where she managed acts like Nirvana and Dinosaur Jr.) and has now settled into music supervision.

In this excerpt from Berklee Online’s *Music is My Life* podcast, she discusses her long and varied career in the music business.

How important is it for you to love the music of the people you’re working with?

Honestly, it’s hugely important. When I was managing a lot of successful artists, you’d get pushed from lawyers who you worked with or record companies like, “Manage this band. Can you get involved?” People would offer to pay you to manage a band, who would offer you a monthly fee. Honestly, I can’t even make a phone call on behalf of someone I’m not psyched about. I just can’t do it.

So you were an intern at Caroline Records and you signed Hole. How did that happen?

The way I remember it, again, everyone’s memories are different, but I remember we were about to sign Henry Rollins, which I was driving and I was super excited. I was a massive Black Flag fan. At the last minute, he bailed and signed to a major label. This was at the height of the “indie vs. major” culture war. All these punk rock acts—and I think it started with Sonic Youth—were signing to Geffen, so Henry Rollins bailed last-minute on signing to Caroline and signed to a major. I was devastated. As I came into work I was shell-shocked every single day.

I also had this apartment on 7th Street and Avenue C, and whenever bands came to town that I knew they'd stay with me because who could afford a hotel in New York City? I had met Babes in Toyland and they were on tour and they came and stayed at my apartment. This was before cell phones. People would give out my apartment number, that's where they're going to be for a few days while in New York. One night I was at home and Courtney Love called looking for Kat Bjelland from Babes in Toyland; Kat wasn't there.

We ended up talking to each other on the phone. Courtney was like, "You work at a record label. Let me play you some of my music over the phone," which she did. They had just put out their first seven-inch with Sympathy for the Record Industry, and I just thought she was amazing and I was so taken with her as a person on the phone. She was so clear about what she wanted and the path to it.

At the same time that Courtney was calling my apartment, and we were becoming phone buddies, the Henry Rollins thing went down. Then we had a hugely successful album with Primus and then they were going to go sign to Interscope and not deliver the second album to us. I was really broken. I couldn't believe it. Keith Wood, my boss at Caroline said, "What are we going to do? You've got to get out of your funk, you're so down."

I was down about Henry Rollins. I was down about Primus, and I said, “Well, there’s this band in California, I think we should sign them. If we sign them that would totally take me out of my funk, we can make an album with them.” Kim Gordon [of Sonic Youth] should be the producer and we had just made an album with Don Fleming from this band Gumball. So I was like, “Kim and Don could work together. They could produce this album for this band in California called Hole. It’s a no-brainer and that would get me out of my funk.” He was like “done and done, let’s sign them!”

So then what comes next? Is that when you jumped to Gold Mountain Entertainment?

Yeah. That was clearly Hole, that album came out—*Pretty on the Inside*—and just was on its own runway, its own trajectory, and then Nirvana was heating up. The reason I got involved with Nirvana and all the Sub Pop bands was that Caroline had a distribution deal with Sub Pop. So anytime a band would be coming to play in New York for CMJ, Caroline would be their home base. If they had interviews to do or if someone needs to put together a guest list, that would fall to me. When Soundgarden, Mudhoney, Tad, all these bands would come to New York, a lot of them would stay with me at my apartment.

I knew Nirvana the first time they came to New York. They stayed with me. It was the early days. It was before a European tour maybe, and then they came back and stayed with me a few different times. Then I went to a few shows with them. ... But they were definitely a band in my life that I would become friends with. Then when Courtney was at Caroline, I think that's when she went to Chicago when she was going to go see the Pumpkins play because they were at Caroline also, and then that's when she met Kurt in Chicago.



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- Janet Billig Rich

As a matter of fact, the way she got to Chicago—and I think this is part of the ancient lore—was she got a manager who was a prospective manager who she said, “Well, if you buy me this plane ticket to Chicago maybe you could be our manager.” She was real crafty. I learned a lot from her.

That was going on, Gold Mountain was managing Sonic Youth, John Silva was going to manage Nirvana, so it was like all at that same time. John Silva and Danny Goldberg—who were the principals of Gold Mountain at the time—called me and said, “Why don’t you just manage Courtney and Hole and you all come to Gold Mountain?” I think that in hindsight—and I think Danny’s told me since then—that they just wanted Courtney to be with them and they wanted Nirvana to not be distracted. Courtney was such a big presence in their life at that time. That’s why I ended up with Gold Mountain.

Was there this mythos about her personality yet? When did that develop and did you think that was unfair?

No. Well, she came in with the myth and the legendary status because she had already been to England and she had a relationship with Julian Cope. She was in movies already, *Straight to Hell* and she had a scene in *Sid and Nancy*, and the lore was that she was going to get the role of Nancy like it was real. She already was a massive superstar and had it going on.

When you were asked to manage, how did you learn the ropes of how to do that from working at a label to being the one go-to person—or at least the *main* go-to person—for performers?

That's a great question. No one ever told me how to be a manager. There's not a book. I think it's all instinct. And I just always go by "pretend to know what you're doing and you'll figure it out." I don't know, because even at Gold Mountain, it's not like John or Danny was ever like, "This is what you should do." I was managing bands. I started managing with Hole and then Danny, somehow, had a relationship with Evan Dando and the Lemonheads. I had known Evan from being in Boston a lot so it was like, "Oh, you should manage Evan. He needs a manager," and I was like, "Great. I love the Lemonheads. I've seen them a hundred times." Then a friend introduced me to Kim Deal who had come into my office for a meeting. I literally had been in my office for probably two weeks. I'd been a manager all of two weeks and Kim came in and said, "I heard on the radio that the Pixies have broken up," and she'd done a Breeders album before it. So she says "I think Breeders is my full-time gig. So, if you're available, you should be our manager."

I'm guessing your confidence was growing and you must have gotten to a point where you didn't have to pretend like you knew what you were doing at that point, right?

I disagree with that because I think you're possibly having to pretend to know what you're doing because no matter how many record deals you make, publishing deals, licenses, every single one's different. So you're constantly having to re-figure out, re-learn.

At the time that Kim Deal walks into your office, what is your "Here's what I can offer you" pitch?

I don't know. I was never much of a pitcher and I think anytime I had to pitch a band, it was just always more casual like, "Yeah, we should do this. This is what my commission rate is and let's do it," and I never had big contracts. We had management agreements that laid out what the permission structure was and I always tell young people, "have your stuff tidy." Your best friend today, your worst enemy tomorrow. Have your deals done, make sure your contracts are signed and all that stuff and everyone's clear about what money you are making, the difference between net and gross. I'm a quick study and learn fast and I just take experiences and learn from them and keep going.

How did you get into music supervision and become a music rights consultant? You were 20 years into your career in the music industry!

I know it's strange. ... I was traveling a lot and I ended up meeting someone. I got married. I got pregnant with twins, which was a surprise. There were no twins in my family, it was like, "What?" I'm like, "You know what? No sweat, I'll rock this, whatever, this will be fine." When my twins were about a year old, I realized you can't do it all. I wanted to be around, I didn't want to be traveling so much and I was traveling a lot, gone 200 nights by the time my kids were a year old. I was like, "This isn't good for anybody."

And at the time, my one-year-olds are more mature and independent than any of my clients and that for me was a real line in the sand. And I'd started working with Courtney again, Kim Deal, I had a lot of my same old clients from Gold Mountain. So I was working with Courtney, Kim Deal, Guided by Voices, Lisa Loeb, Evan, I think I was working with again at the time. I had an incredible roster, but I was just like, "Oh my God, this is not working," and basically I dropped all my clients and just said like, "Eff it. I'm just going to do whatever comes my way."

And then I made a handful of calls and just called various people I knew and said like, “I’m basically for hire.” I could do whatever. I’m a quick study. One of the first people to call me back was someone who I still work with, his name is Steven Cantor and he’s an incredible filmmaker, and he called me and he said, “I just had my pilot green lit by HBO and I’m going to put you in as the music supervisor,” and I was like, “Awesome! Great! I’ll do that!”

So I called HBO and I spoke to a man named Michael Hamilton who I just recently learned passed away. So sad. He really gave me such a shot, and I said, “I’m the music supervisor in this new series. I haven’t been a music supervisor before, but I’ve done loads of licensing deals. I understand publishing, rights holders, masters in an incredibly deep way,” because I’d made so many record deals and I’ve licensed so much music. All the clients I had did licenses for television and films over the years, so I really had a big understanding of it, and Steven, who hired me, knew exactly what music he wanted.

I wasn’t a music supervisor in the sense of like “you should put this song in this scene.” It wasn’t that at all. Steven knew what he wanted. I was just the facilitator. Michael at HBO was like, “No

problem. Here's our templates. I'll show you exactly what to do." He just basically taught me how to be a clearance person. I did that series and then HBO hired me to do, I don't know, I think I did four or five documentaries for them that year and all of a sudden I had a clearance business, and then shortly after that, Matt Weaver called me with an idea for a musical that he wanted to do, and I'd learned how to clear music for theater. That brought me to *Rock of Ages*, which was an amazing moment in my career because it was just as exciting as other huge moments.

Yeah, but a little bit safer, right?

Oh my God. What's so exciting about being a producer in theater, and I shared this with some of my old management colleagues, was that like, if you have a client that doesn't want to get onstage or is having a tantrum about something and you're the manager, you're screwed. The band is not going onstage. No one is getting paid, it upends the entire thing. In theater, if someone doesn't want to get up onstage, there's an understudy! No one has tantrums. Everyone is an adult. They're all incredibly happy to be there. They all know how lucky they are.

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Instructor Spotlight:

Stephen Canfield

Stephen Canfield is an expert in global brand strategy, currently serving as the Head of Host Marketing at Airbnb. Prior to that, he worked as Vice President of Marketing for WeTransfer and program director for Red Bull Sound Select. He graduated from Berklee College of Music with his degree in Music Business/Management.

At Berklee Online, Stephen co-authored the graduate course *Music Marketing: Strategy for Consumer Brands*.

What attracted you to the business side of the industry?

Working on the business side gives you the chance to work across all genres and multiple industries, and it can be incredibly rewarding if you do it for the right reasons.

Tell us about your musical background.

I grew up writing songs and playing in bands. I came to Berklee to study guitar, but I realized that I wasn't as good as the people in my headphones. That led me to enroll in music business courses, where I found an interest in marketing and communications.

Who do you admire for making the most of their brand?

I fell in love with Run the Jewels on their first record and was fortunate enough to produce a show with them. It's been amazing to see Killer Mike amplify his voice as an activist.

What's the biggest lesson you learned in the music business?

Quality and attention to detail matter, and they're not worth sacrificing to get to the easy answer.

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