

## 5.2. You never know: An exploration of the difficulties in music career development when engaging with record labels

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### Abstract

Becoming a full-time career musician is fraught with challenges and uncertainties. This paper discusses the real-world challenges of trying to develop a music career in relation to musicians' engages with record labels. It places a particular focus on the experiences of musicians from the indie pop/rock music scene in Perth, Western Australia. This local scene attracted significant national attention from the mid-1990s through to the late-2000s, with a plethora of artists courted and signed to varying recording contracts. This paper reflects on the challenges of developing and sustaining a music career in relation to the myriad of internal and external factors that influence the ways in which record labels engage with, and market, musicians and their music to audiences.

**Keywords:** music careers, record labels, music commodification.

### 1. Introduction

Signing, developing and marketing music to audiences is a risky business. For record labels, who sit at the crossroads of music development, marketing and audience engagement, they constantly work to mitigate this risk by continuously signing new artists, and re-evaluating the fortunes of those already on their rosters. In doing so, they look to the future and the past all at once: the success and fortunes of artists is not known until they engage with audiences, but, at the same time, historical popularity and marketing trends are considered when determining which artists to sign, prioritise and market, and how to do so. Such factors inevitably impact upon the ways in which musicians who engage with record labels can and cannot develop full-time music careers.

Considering the risk with which record labels operate, and the ways in which this impacts musicians who choose to engage with them, this paper reports on the experiences of five indie pop/rock groups from Perth, Western Australia. These groups gained the attention of national and international record labels in the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s, with their experiences providing a useful case study through which to explore the challenges of engaging with record labels due to the high level, and unexpected nature of, the interest in their music.

This paper works to bridge the gap between prior research into the nature of musicians' careers and the recorded music industry's structure and functioning. Previous research into music career development and sustainability has encompassed a range of economic scoping studies (Throsby 2007, 2010; Throsby and Zednick, 2010, 2011), examinations of the notion of labour in music and the broader arts sector, and the ways in a broad range of artists navigate multiple roles consecutively and concurrently in order to sustain a full-time creative career (Le *et al.*, 2014; Lingo *et al.*, 2013; Menger, 1999; Morgan *et al.*, 2013; Teague and Smith, 2015). In addition, work has been undertaken analysing the patterns of migration for musicians wishing to pursue full-time musical employment (Bennett, 2010), and the ways in which musicians make career related decisions based on the experiences of their peers (Ballico, 2015). A range of literature has also examined the structure and functioning of the recorded music industry, including the ways in which

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it engages musicians and their music in its pursuit of profits (Bishop, 2005; Jones, 2002; Stahl, 2011; Wikstom).

The data drawn on for this paper is from a PhD level project examining indie pop/rock music activity in Perth, Western Australia. This project examined music making culture as well as career, business, and sector development in relation to the lived experiences of 48 interviewees (25 musicians, and 23 industry personnel) who were directly involved with the creation and dissemination of indie pop/rock music from Perth between 1998 and 2009. These interviewees were chosen based on the researcher's prior knowledge of the sector (gained through several years' experience in a range of local music related roles ranging from community radio announcing, music journalism and blogging) as well as knowledge accumulated during data collection. Key to this research was the ways in which these musicians have and have not developed careers in light of an increased interest in this local scene. This interest came from a combination of national and international record labels, as well as media outlets. Musicians of varying level of success and recognition were included, with a combination of those who had carved out sustaining careers, to those who were still trying to, or had previously attempted to so.

Research interviews were undertaken over a two-year period (2010–2012) and were semi-structured in nature. A broad set of base questions were used as a guide while also allowing for a natural flow of conversation between the researcher and interviewee. Interviews were undertaken at a range of locations including in cafes, offices, pubs, and on occasion, the homes of interviewees. A small number were also undertaken over the phone and via email. Most interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes, with the maximum duration being two hours. Verbatim transcriptions were produced by the researcher for each interview, based off audio recordings for those that were done in a face-to-face or over-the-phone manner. These transcripts thematically analysed in relation to the topics discussed and the ways in which they related to the project's broad questions regarding career, business and sector development.

Framed within the theories of music as a form of creative capital and commodity, this paper first provides an overview of these theories before examining the structure of the recorded music industry within global and national contexts. The paper then delves deeply into an analysis of the lived experiences of the five groups, in relation to engaging with and being marketed by a range of record labels in the mid — late 1990s and early 2000s. This analysis focuses on a range of internal and external factors that influenced the decisions made by record labels when deciding to work with these groups, and in turn explores the impacts these decisions had on the musicians in question.

## **2. Music as form of creative capital and a commodity**

Creativity is not an economic activity, however, as Howkins (2002, p. 1) explains, it "may become so when it produces an idea with economic implications or a tradable product." Even so; the point at which an idea becomes a product — and as such becomes capital — can be hard to define. As Howkins, (2002, p. 199) goes on to point out, capital, as defined by economists, is "something which is not, or not only, valued for current use but as an investment for the future". Capital is "stock; it is stable; it has longevity." The main types of capital have historically been monetary (financial capital) and buildings and equipment (physical capital).

Creativity can be considered capital because "it results from investment, which the owner may increase or vary; and it is a significant input to future creativity and creative products" (Howkins, 2002, p. 211). Investment in creativity can be financial and non-financial. Financial investment can range from investments in the development of creative products (such as advances paid by record labels to musicians), the purchasing of products and services to assist in the creative process (such as musical equipment, the services of producers and recording engineers as well as studio time), to the investment made when marketing a product to audiences. From the perspective of musicians, financial investment can also include the de facto investment made when choosing a lifestyle which

favours creative pursuits over full time paid employment, working in lower paying jobs due to a passion and desire for making music, or by accepting a lower (or completely forfeiting a) profit margin in order to support music production (Throsby, 2007). An important component in developing a music career is being able to manage the process through which creativity, through music, becomes capital.

When creativity is converted to capital, it gains most value “when it is managed and made purposive” (Howkins, 2002, p. 212). That is, by managing and giving creative capital a definite purpose, it has a much higher chance of gaining value — whether that is financial value or value through its enrichment of culture. This is in contrast to creative capital that is unmanaged and exists without a purpose. As Negus and Pickering (2004, pp. 57–58) explain, creative products such as songs undergo a process “whereby they are made commercial — and this is why modern economies employ so many people in marketing, publicity and public relations. Their aim is to connect the work of cultural producer with the lives of consumers.” As Attali (1985, p. 185) similarly comments, in order for music to be seen as capital, it has required that the:

Labour of the creation and interpretation of music (...) be assigned value (...) and it was necessary to establish a distinction between the value of the work and the value of its representation, the value of the program and that of its usage.

The assigning of this value is a critical to the process of turning music into a commodity. Following along in this process is the need to understand the way in which the music is to be marketed to audiences, and the best audiences to market to. Broadly, the marketing of music sees it be constructed as an “experience good”, with which “there is great uncertainty about how consumers will value a newly created product short of producing the good and placing it before them” (Caves, 2000, p. 2). Due to these market uncertainties, record label executives provide a critical function, essentially acting as the “gatekeepers” or “tastemakers” of the music industry. These labels can be of a “major” or “independent” nature, and form the basis of the commodified music industry.

### **3. The structure of the recorded music industry: Global and national contexts**

With a value of \$US 15B, the international recorded music industry comprises “major” and ‘independent’ record labels. Over the last decade or so, these majors have condensed from five, (Sony, Universal, Warner, EMI and Polydor), to four (Sony, Universal, Warner and EMI), and now three (Sony, Universal and Warner). This sector of the recorded music industry has been responsible for 75% of the world’s commercial musical output since 2004 (IFPI, 2016; Bishop, 2005, p. 443). As at 2009, more than 4000 artists were signed to these labels across the globe, with tens of thousands more artists signed to independents, some of which are aligned with the majors (IFPI, 2010b, p. 6).

The primary distinction between majors and independents is whether they form part of a media conglomerate. Importantly, and in line with changes that have occurred within the broader media and entertainment industries, the structure of this sector has undergone tremendous changes over the last two decades. This is due in part to the buyouts and mergers mentioned above, but also as a result of a changing media and music consumption landscape. One constant despite these changes, however, is the continuing importance of signing new artists and releasing new records. In order to sell and market music and related products is at the heart of how they generate revenue.

Recorded music forms the basis of the music industry, acting as a promotional tool on radio and television, with CD sales traditionally being the way through which labels recoup their costs. This model has shifted in recent times, particularly with the development of “360 deals” — in which labels recoup their costs not only through record sales, but also through live ticket sales and

merchandise (two ways musicians would traditionally generate most of their income) — however, record labels continue to provide connections between musicians, media and audiences, all the while continuing to invest in new artists and associated outputs. This continued investment is viewed to be risky as “only a minority of the artists developed will be commercially successful in a highly competitive market” (IFPI, 2010a, p. 6).

Arguably, the more control these multi-national corporations maintain, the higher chance they have of influencing who succeeds within the music industries (Jones, 2002). Knowing how to recognise and nurture talent is a key element to succeeding in the music industry. It requires record labels “to read the consumer market and identify how different sorts of music might work for different audiences” (Market Equity, 2002, p. 15). Record labels bridge the gap between musicians and music consumers. This space is also filled with a multitude of media, retail outlets and live music venues through which music is marketed and distributed. Essentially, the role of the music industry workers employed by/ operating through the labels is to finance, develop, market and distribute music to consumers (Borg, 2008, p. 172). The capacity of labels to undertake these aspects of music production and dissemination is underpinned by the size, structure and underlying characteristics of the label (Wikstrom, 2009).

Artists can be signed to recording contracts, which can range from “full service” — where the label is entirely responsible for financing the development, marketing and distribution of music products — to contracts under which the label is only responsible for one component of the financing, recording, distribution, marketing and/ or touring component. Based predominantly in Europe, the international recorded music industry has regional and national offices which have a degree of autonomy in the signings and marketing of acts within these place-specific markets. This multi-layer aspect to their businesses is important due to local, regional, and international flows in music taste and popular consumption trends which influence the decisions made by record labels in the signing of artists and the marketing of music to audiences.

The Australian music industry operates as an extension of the international music industry with all major labels having offices in Australia. These regionally-focused offices are responsible for distributing international product within the Australian and New Zealand music markets, while also working with acts specific to this region. These labels can also negotiate the promotion and marketing of Australian artists and their releases within international contexts. Beyond this sector, Australia is also home to a strong market of independent record labels.

Importantly, local, regional and international trends in music popularity and consumption influence the signings that occur within different territories. Such flows of popularity influenced a shift in focus from the Australian labels, who started to look to Perth as a viable talent pool. This led to a peak in interest around the local scene. More broadly, a shift in the popularity of alternative music within the Australian market further influenced the signings and market positioning of groups from Perth who could fill this niche. Overall, while the popularity of, and interest in, Perth music within the Australian market has spearheaded its integration into the broader market, but even at times of peak interest, this dynamic remains at the mercy of broader popularity trends.

Record labels have traditionally acted as the “tastemakers” of the music sector (Frere-Jones, 2010), while also providing musicians with finance, marketing nous and access to distribution channels, that in turn facilitate their music connecting with audiences. In the last two decades, however, the role of record labels has shifted. This shift has occurred as a result of technological advances which have made it easier and cheaper for musicians to record, promote, release and distribute their music themselves, while also changing the ways in which audiences pay for and consume music. As a result, the ways in which musicians are invested in, and in turn, how the labels — particularly the majors — recoup this investment has shifted. Historically, record labels would recoup their costs through the sale of records, with artists making their profits predominantly through performing live and selling merchandise. Nowadays, however, shifting revenue streams have led to the development of a “360 model” (or multiple rights deal) in which labels take a percentage of profits from all of an artist’s revenue streams (Stahl, 2011).

As IFPI (2012, p. 11) explains, only a small number of acts signed to major labels will achieve significant success. While there is some conjecture as to the investment versus success ratio, recent estimates are around one in five, having increased from one in ten a decade ago. While this success rate may have increased, it is important to understand the shifts in the way in which record labels make money, which have likely resulted in a decline in the number of acts they are investing in.

It is this risk that results in artist development being highly mediated, with the record industry largely concerned with the controlling and exploiting of musical products (Wikstrom, 2009; Stahl, 2011). Attempting to have control over a market can see labels keeping acts on their roster which they have no desire to market to audiences but do not want to risk having another label having success with them; placing a higher emphasis on acts within their roster which they believe will make a profit; and deciding to release acts from their contracts once they feel they are no longer likely to succeed commercially. As Jones explains this process often leaves artists and their managers in the dark:

Record company intermediaries are continuously reassessing the likely fortunes of their signed acts for the very basic reason that they never have sufficient resources to give each act the same degree of support and attention. Consequently, they operate on a system of 'prioritisation', but it is a system largely hidden from the view of the act, and as far as possible, from the act's manager.

While record labels can take control over acts in terms of marketing, they can also influence decisions as to where the artists record. Such decisions are based on the anticipated goals of marketing the band, as well as the amount of money the label are willing to invest in recording. Another reason control is so important in the music industry is because of the position of music production as part of the copyright industry. In order to work to a strategy, and to position acts within the market in a way they see fit, record labels must control as much as they can across the spectrum of artists' outputs (Jones, 2002, p. 150). This includes owning rights to the music created, the distribution channels and to the ways in which artists are marketed (Jones, 2002, p. 15). The reason this control is critical to the record labels as it can help mitigate the uncertain nature of the sector. As Caves (2000, p. 146, emphasis in original) explains:

*Nobody knows*, but the maker and retailer work in great uncertainty about demand for the individual creative product (...) [there] is a small problem of selecting and dealing in small quantities of the *infinite variety* of close-substitute products.

To this end, the uncertain nature of the processes of music commodification requires musicians to believe "that the relationships they enter into with intermediary figures will result in their own successful commodification" (Jones, 2002, p. 153). A combination of their desire to pursue music, which is often informed by their own music tastes and fandom, coupled with being in the dark about the commodification process makes acts "operationally disempowered" in this process, leaving them vulnerable (2002, pp. 153-154). Regardless of trustworthy relationships within the music industry — and specifically between musicians, their managers and label representatives, the operation and prioritisation principles can result in intra-label competition due to a lack of equality within record company departments (Jones, 2002, p. 154).

In short, while an act may sign with a record label, and be fully supported by the employees assigned to them, label employees outside this core group can still influence how an act is developed and marketed, and may choose not to invest the level of resources required to bring the act to market prominence. This can be due to pressure to achieve other sales targets, or to make a particular impression within a particular market. The result of this intra-label competition can range from changing release dates of records in order to focus on other, more high profile acts; to a label's sole focus being placed on one, or a small group of, acts which they believe will generate the most profit. The result for lesser known acts, and acts at a critical developmental stage, is that they can be left unsupported and in limbo.

A further complication of the music commodification process is the competition which exists when a musical product engages with distribution and promotional channels beyond the label's control. The reason for this relinquishment is due to the uncertain market forces in which labels try to position musical acts. This degree of uncertainty is evident in the levels of success as well as the shifts in music consumption trends and has implications for both labels and musicians alike, as they cannot feasibly control how they are received by the market. This is what makes trying to develop a full-time music career so challenging.

#### **4. The realities of trying to forge a music career: Challenging and uncertain**

For the musicians interviewed for the research reported on here, some have been able to forge lasting full-time careers, while others were still hoping to, and for some, their priorities shifted away from wanting a music career, to undertaking to non-musical work, with creating and performing music reverting to a hobby. In some instances, the shifts away from pursuing music were further influenced by broader personal decisions such as deciding to "settle down" (such as getting married, starting a family, and purchasing real estate) or from being exhausted and "burnt out" from trying to succeed at a music career. The five group case studies all experienced difficulties in being able to develop and sustain a full-time music career, specifically in relation to their experiences of engaging with record labels.

When reflecting on their early aspirations, most musicians spoke of their early engagements with the local live scene. Watching other local acts perform, and particularly those who were attracting the attention of the national media industry and record labels, while also building audiences beyond the state, created a strong sense of immediacy and belief that it was a music career was viable. This shift in attitude, which also went hand in hand with a positive attitude toward being able to pursue such a career from Perth was significant to the ability for the local sector to continue to develop. To this end, the achievements of members of the local music scene influenced what the musicians hoped to achieve, and the paths they believed they needed to take in order to do so. More broadly, these career desires were also influenced by global trends and attitudes towards success, which, at the time, were heavily weighted toward being signed to major labels, either directly, or by one of their established subsidiaries. As these musicians started seriously pursuing their musicianship, their desires to continue doing so were also influenced by their experiences of engaging with the national industry, with their experiences engaging with record labels being particularly influential to how they would continue to feel toward wishing to pursue a full-time music career.

Musicians often spoke of a sense of naivety when it came to attracting the attention of the national music industry, and particularly when dealing with record labels. With the increased interest in Perth music unexpected, and with the attitude that signing with the majors, in one way or another, was the pathway to a lasting career, musicians occasionally found themselves in what Jones (2002) terms "operationally disempowered". This disempowerment ranged from being contractually bound to labels they did no longer wanted to be signed to, being the subject of intra-label competition (for example in cases where other artists were being prioritised over them in terms of release schedules), and being marketed in a way they, the media and audiences were uncomfortable with and non-receptive toward. In some instances, the levels of success achieved by other acts would influence the expectations placed on Perth musicians to reach similar thresholds. It is also important to understand that while this increased interest further encouraged the continued signing of Perth acts, it did not result in similar levels of success and/ or recognition for all concerned. Nor did it leave them immune from inter-label competition in attempts to capitalise on success achieved and broader interest in Perth music.

For example, Turnstyle were signed to the independent label Spunk, a relatively new label in the mid-late 1990s. At the time, the label accessed distribution services through the larger

independent, Festival. Vocalist for the band Adem Kerimofski (pers. comm.) recalls how, once the group had started to achieve success, Festival were trying to circumvent Spunk and sign the group directly:

Spunk were the people putting out or records, but, they were distributed by Festival so, once we sort of started getting a bit popular, Festival I think, wanted a little (pauses) little finger in the pie. So, but, we always had our allegiance with Spunk and we had a couple of run-ins with people from Festival, which weren't that pleasant and that we didn't really want to work with them.

The relationships between labels by way of distribution and financing can be prohibitive to artists being able to record with particular producers and in particular ways. For example, to return to the band The Fergusons, who ended up signed to Dew Process, a label that received funding through EMI in its early days, their debut album was refused funding as Dew Process could not get approval from EMI to provide the band with the funding they requested for their album. Reflecting on this experience, which also came at a time they had started to lose momentum, the band members explain (pers. comm.):

Nistelberger: We didn't get to do the album because it was going to be too expensive.

Joyce: Look I think it was [the producers] recording (...) He came to us and said 'This is how I record' and we're like 'that's perfect'.

Beadon We got along with him so well.

Nistelberger: We got along with him really well but, the problem was his price. [The] record company were just like 'no chance that we'd spend that much money on a band that hasn't released an album before.'

Beadon: And at that stage we'd lost all of our momentum as well [and] it just went from there and then it came to a full halt.

Without the funding to record the album, coupled with a loss of momentum due to the illness of one of the band members, the Fergusons disbanded shortly thereafter. In other cases, the ability for artists to continue to build traction with national audiences can be influenced by changes to label personnel, which is common in cases where labels get bought out.

For example, having originally signed to Festival-Mushroom Records, Red Jezebel are a band that found themselves on the roster of the major label Warner Music's following a take-over of Festival-Mushroom in the mid-2000s. This resulted in the band going from being signed to an independent label to being involved with a major instead. The tension of this was exacerbated by the departure of key label employees in whom Red Jezebel had confidence. For the band, this meant that industry members who supported them were no longer with the label, which in turn meant the group were no longer a priority in the release schedule. They found the release date for their album *How I learned to stop worrying* was being repeatedly pushed back. The group's bassist, Mark Cruickshank (pers. comm.) explains what this experience was like for the band:

The writing was on the wall that they weren't gonna put any effort into us (...) From what I gather it became quite clear that there wasn't much point staying with them (...) I mean it was all quite amicable but, yeah it was just quite clear there was no point being with the label (...) And they wanted to push us really hard too. Like when they were hot they were really hot and when they were cold they were really cold (*laughs*). Like they were wanting to go hard, like they were just really expecting lots and lots of touring and we all had [day] jobs and that so it was a little bit freaky.

Due to this lack of interest and support from the label, the group negotiated out of their contract and released their second record in 2007 independently, with distribution through the label MGM. Nowadays the band perform sporadically in Perth, have not undertaken a national tour

in nearly a decade, and while they have released a third album in the last 12 months, are largely inactive.

In other cases some acts can be signed with the label having a particular aim in regards to how they are to be marketed and the success they are expected to achieve. For example, the band End of Fashion were signed at a time in which there was a particular focus on Australian music having an impact in the US market. As examined in Ballico (2012), the band were signed to the Australian arm of EMI, with the hopes of having the band make significant inroads in the US market. This rationale influenced the approach to their recordings (being sent to the US to work with a well-known producer), the way in which they were marketed (as “the next big thing”) and the way in which the Australian arm of EMI interfered with the bands ability to sign distribution and/ or licensing deals with EMI arms that did not cover the US market. As the band did not achieve success for EMI US, they were blocked from being able to sign with regional offices around the world who were interested in them.

Interest from labels is not enough of a guarantee, however, that one will become a successful musician. The ways in which these experiences play out are influenced by the broader popularity trends that occur in the market in which the music is to be marketed, the other acts that the label is pursuing or has already signed with, and in cases where inter-label competition sees artists having to navigate competition between the organisations themselves. These experiences can undoubtedly influence musicians continued abilities and desires to pursue being a full-time career musician. Another facet of label engagement is when it is not expected that an act will recoup costs and therefore will be released from their contract.

The Avenues were a group closely associated with several very high profile local acts through various creative and personal links. Through a combination of these links and touring nationally with other higher profile Perth bands, they were able to slowly build a national fan base and become known to national media. They signed a deal with Rubber Records, an independent label based in Sydney, who, with the consent of the band and their management, decided to give away one of their songs, *Slow moving*, for free online. This track was offered through the website of national youth broadcaster Triple j, a government-funded radio station that sits as a part of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. While largely beyond the scope of this paper, it is worthwhile noting that this station was particularly critical to the advancement of Perth music within the national consciousness and provided airplay and on-air editorial coverage for many local bands. Receiving airplay on the station was even for some artists considered a marker of having reached a certain pinnacle of success.

*Slow moving* the most downloaded track from the station’s website at that point, and it raised the profile of the band, but also caused difficulties in creating an expectation that there was a product to sell to audiences. When the band signed with the label, they had recorded an Extended Player on which *Slow moving* was featured. This meant, with the song being given away for free, audiences were not inclined to purchase the EP. As the band’s guitarist and vocalist Cain Turnston (pers. comm.) says:

[The label] released the EP and they did push it (...) you just can’t get any traction with something that you know, if you’re getting it for free why would people go and buy it? And EPs for all the people [that] like putting them out and they treat them like mini albums and we agonise over the artwork and ‘oh the track listing has to be thus’ and you know, treat it as a single, radio’s only gonna play one song from it. You can’t release a second single from an EP. So essentially it’s a glorified single (...) [and] if that single is given away you don’t get another bite out of it unfortunately.

While this experience in isolation did not break up the band (which ultimately occurred due to continued line-up changes), the ability for the band to gain and retain traction with national audiences undoubtedly caused difficulties in the members being able to pursue music full-time. Ultimately, the band were released from their contract with the label as they were not viewed to be likely of recouping any investment made.



The experiences discussed here are all illustrative of the ways in which musicians' engagement with music shifts over time, particularly in relation to their desires to continuing pursuing music as a full-time career. Significantly, for these musicians, their desires to pursue full-time music careers have been directly influenced by their experiences of engaging with record labels. These experiences have seen them be subject to a range of inter- and intra- label competition, being marketed in a way in which they were not comfortable with (and in which the media and associated audiences were not highly receptive to), and being unable to secure adequate financial support to undertake recording in a particular manner. Taken in isolation, such challenges may seem minor, but when considered in light of the commodification of music, and the ways in which musicians become "operationally disempowered" (Jones, 2002, pp. 153–154) through this process.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion this paper has examined the real-world challenges of trying to develop a musical career. It has paid particular attention to the experiences of musicians who have actively attempted to develop music careers with the support of record labels. This paper has been underpinned by an examination of role of record labels in the commodification process of music as well as the notion of music being viewed as a form of creative capital. It has reflected on the challenges faced by musicians with regard to their engagement with record labels, and in turn, the internal and external factors that influence the ways in which labels engage with musicians and market them to audiences. As has been discussed, when musicians are attempting to, and become signed to labels, they can experience difficulties in developing and sustaining their careers. Interest from labels is not enough of a guarantee that one will become a successful musician. The ways in which these experiences play out are influenced by the broader popularity trends that occur within the market to which the music is to be positioned, the other acts that the label is pursuing or has already signed with, and in cases where inter-label competition sees artists having to navigate competition between the organisations themselves. These experiences can also undoubtedly influence musicians continued abilities and desires to pursue being a full-time career musician.

The ways in which careers have and have not developed in relation to being signed to labels, also reflect shifts to the ways in which musicians view the viability of being a full-time career musician. As this paper has broadly explored, when musicians relinquish control in order to access the funding, distribution and marketing nous of record labels, but are not rewarded with becoming full-time musicians, or find that developing and sustaining their careers has become stressful and exhausting, they can experience a strong shift in desire away from wanting to be a full-time musician.

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