

THE SONGLAB: MUSIC BUSINESS DEJARGONISED

BRANDING AND ARTISTIC IDENTITY



What Are You and Who Is Buying It?

SONIC IDENTITY

- **Your sound is a huge part of who and what you are as an artist.**
- **It draws a link between what you like and what others like about you.**
- **It takes time to find your sound and it is a much harder goal to achieve when you work on your own to find it.**
- **Collaboration is key to evolution because it enables you to discover new sounds, new ideas and alternate approaches to creating music. Working with other songwriters, musicians and producers will broaden your musical experiences and often lead to new ways of thinking.**
- **Your sound is your sonic identity and it is characterised by factors such as your vocals, your vocabulary, your genres, your choice of instrumentation, your production values, your song structure and your feel.**
- **Your sonic identity doesn't need to define you forever but it does need to define you for your entrance into the music industry so that people can understand you and what your music means.**

BRANDING

- What is your artistic message? Do you have one? Think deeply about it.
- What is your primary genre of music? Do you have one or is it a hybrid of genres and if so what are they?
- What colours are you associating with your style? Be careful to differentiate between what you like and what is right for you as there is often a difference.
- What clothes are you wearing and how are you wearing them? This will directly influence your market space.
- A great place to start is to identify the artists that inspire you in your field. Build a fusion of their styles and add your personal touch. In time this approach may spawn your own branding identity.
- What are your values as an artist?
- Now think about your artwork. Does it fall inline with the rest of your branding?
- What about your fonts? What characteristics are associated with your fonts?
- Do you know who your target audience are? Try and narrow down who your fans are but imagining what they look like and what clothes and shoes they wear. Are you styling yourself the same way?
- If you walked down the street with a bunch of your flyers in your hand would you know who to pass your flyers to based on what they look like? If you don't then it might be that you don't know enough about who you are appealing to.
- If you can answer all of these questions then you are capable of branding yourself. If you can't, dig deep into these answers until you figure out what your answers are.

BOXES

- If you buy something from amazon. They put it in in a box and they sell it to you. It has to go in a box for that to happen.
- Your music is no different, especially at the start of your career.
- As a person, you don't have to be put into a box. As a recording artist you do, especially at the beginning of your career.
- For you to gain algorithmic growth through streaming and for you to gain organic growth in the live scene you need to know what your primary and secondary genres are. Knowing what those genres are will enable you to put yourself into a box that can be sold.
- Your genres along with other metrics such as your language, your tempos, your keys, your colours and your moods will form what is known as your meta data. If any of your meta data doesn't fall inline with what you say it is, then your project may struggle. Perhaps one of your songs is triumphant and empowering but you consider it to be melancholy ? You might think its melancholic because that is what represents the mood you were in when you wrote the song but now its been produced and branded with artwork, its true colours and mood have shown it to be something different. How will you know? This is where it becomes useful to play your songs to a few trusted sources who may help you inform you as to what your genre and mood is. This will significantly help your project to gain traction through categorical understanding.
- Try and understand the difference between the music you like and the music you make. Think critically about it and by this I mean try and listen to music as a professional and not as a fan. You started making music because you are a music fan. However, since then you've shaped yourself into a music professional so try and think like one too.

WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE?

- It is important to try and build an understanding of what message you are trying to get across.
- Perhaps you hold a rebellious message like how punk and rock often do? Perhaps you hold a boastful and semi autobiographical message like how Hip Hop often does? Perhaps you like to tell human interest stories like how folk and country artists sometimes do? Perhaps you like to explore messages of heartache, melancholy and hope like how singer songwriters do? Perhaps your lyrics fit with escapism and adrenalin like how many dance songs do?
- Regardless of the genre, if an artist can send an overall coherent message in their first body of work it makes them easier to sell. This message can evolve or even change completely as an artists career progresses but initially it could be argued that it is an important part of how a new artist is introduced to their audience.
- Let's take a look at some case study examples of where an artist's message, mood and genre was clear at the start of their career.

P!NK

EARLY CAREER

- Genre: Pop Punk
- Message: Rebellious nature, anti establishment, doesn't trade on her good looks.
- Mood: Upbeat, reckless.



ABSORB THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE



COLDPLAY

EARLY CAREER

- **Genre: Indie Rock**
- **Message: Post britpop fresh approach on indie music, styled to not look styled and honest approach to organic songwriting.**
- **Mood: Melancholic, Heartfelt.**



ABSORB THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE



ED SHEERAN

EARLY CAREER

- Genre: Singer Songwriter
- Message: I can sing but I can rap as good as anyone from the grime scene whilst playing guitar. I'm a folk songwriter at heart but I'm not afraid of having my song remixed.
- Mood: Sincerity, autobiographical and heartfelt.



ABSORB THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE



ED SHEERAN

DRAKE

- Genre: Hip Hop
- Message: I can freestyle all day long. My art form is legit and I'm not afraid to blend cultures in my music with the use of my unique vocal timbre and melodic rapping.
- Mood: Sensitive, complexity, party.



ABSORB THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE



SUITABLE PLATFORMS OF COMMUNICATION

- One of the key facets of reaching your target audience is the way in which you communicate yourself and what platforms you use to achieve this.
- Does the openness of twitch streaming your creativity, work for your genre and audience? Perhaps uploading your demos to your soundcloud page to keep your fans engaged with your evolution works for you? Perhaps twitter is your perfect conversational platform for connecting with followers? Maybe instagram stories are the suitable choice for your style? Maybe you write blogs and share them through your own direct-to-fan subscription model? Perhaps youtube is the only place you share your early career work?
- Think carefully about what message you are sending and what platform you are using to send it because this should fall inline with the values you have set yourself as an artist.

SUMMARY

- Think carefully about who and what you are and who that relates to and how.
- What values do you hold and what message are you sending in your genre?
- Be sincere. If you're not being legitimate there will be a time limitation to your success.
- Like anything, there's balance to the thinking.