

Title:

Why You Should Set Up Your Own Record Label, and How To Do It

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Summary:

Music is changing. In fact, the music industry is changing; it is changing even faster than it realises. Major record labels are often up to speed on latest developments, but it is indie music that leads the way in the music world - and everyone else seems to follow. Indeed, with the online music revolution taking place right now, being signed to a major record label is less and less important. However, having your own record label can be more and more beneficial.

Keywords:

record label, independent musician, emerging artist, signed, indie music, band promotion

Article Body:

Music is changing. In fact, the music industry is changing; it is changing even faster than it realises. Major record labels are often up to speed on latest developments, but it is indie music that leads the way in the music world - and everyone else seems to follow. Indeed, with the online music revolution taking place right now, being signed to a major record label is less and less important. However, having your own record label can be more and more beneficial.

Starting out

First of all, you really have to think about the image you want to convey. Every record label has an image, mostly created by the selection of bands on the label. So start off by grouping together with some bands you know that are similar to yours. Make sure that these bands are serious, and that they believe in the record label. You will be doing a lot of band promotion together, and sharing a lot of resources, so you need to trust these musicians, and you need to maintain your brand identity. Because yes; a record label is a 'brand'. Think of certain record labels you know, and you immediately associate them with a certain ethos - a certain type of music. For example, 4AD built its reputation by signing bands like The Throwing Muses, Dead Can Dance, This Mortal Coil, The Cocteau Twins, and of course, The Pixies. It has always been known as an off-

the-wall combination of ethereal and edgy rock bands.

First steps - sharing resources

Sharing your resources as a young record label is very important. It is essential that every band on the label helps in the creation by joining in fully. Finding a rehearsal studio is a good first step - find a location that you can all share, and use your own equipment. You will cut down on costs, and you will find that you have more time available for rehearsing. Secondly, if you have some money behind you, try to assemble your own studio. You can maybe contact other studios to see if they have old equipment that they want to sell second-hand, or you can scour the internet for offers. If you have the equipment to record, then you won't have to pay for studio time, and you can take as long as you want to record your music.

This initial investment may hurt you, but a record label is a long-term investment, and if you are serious about producing good quality music, you are taking the right steps.

First steps - Responsibilities

Everyone involved in the record label should know their responsibilities. First of all, you should be looking at getting a distribution deal. This means that someone has to contact the distributors and cut a deal with them, and maintain friendly relations. Distributors will often ask record labels for approximately 40% of the cover price of a CD, which may seem like a lot, but it will get your CDs into the record shops.

Naturally, not everyone buys CDs nowadays. Music is changing, don't forget, and the online revolution means that people are downloading music online more and more. Inclusion on i-Tunes, therefore, is absolutely essential, as is your own page on myspace.com. You should have your own page for the record label, as well as pages for each band - make sure that as many people as possible can hear your music and can see that your label exists.

Someone should be regularly contacting radio stations, both internet radio stations and traditional radio stations. Once you have targeted the radio stations you want to work with, you can cut a deal with them, maintain good relations with them, and carry out your band promotion.

Next steps - Creating The Product

So, once you have set up your organisation, you have to create a product to

promote. Make sure that you only release one CD at a time, so that you can focus your promotion - try to have all the groups working to a schedule that is set well in advance. That way, you can organise the band promotion so that everyone benefits from it.

You need to consider copyright as well. Each band has to copyright its own music before putting it out on the net, or distributing it in record shops, and you have to copyright your own brand as well. This is part of the regular paperwork involved in running your own record label, so make sure that you know your country's administration backwards!

When promoting gigs, make sure that your flyers all carry the same identity, i.e. your record label logo, and the same layout. This gives people the idea that something important is happening, and creating a buzz around your groups is very important. When people see a record label at the bottom of a flyer, they are immediately impressed, so in effect, you are creating your own buzz!

Keeping it going

So you have your rehearsal studio, you are producing your own music yourself, and your bands are playing concerts, and doing well. So keep it up - keep coming up with new promotional ideas, and keep the buzz alive. Create a small festival, make sure that your label is recognised by the owners of the local venues and make sure that you have a good reputation. You have a lot of organising to do if you are going to run your own record label, but it's worth the time and the effort.

It is also important that you look for independent musicians who might want to join your record label. You will probably receive a lot of demos from various bands, but the best way to add indie bands to your label is to go out and find them yourself. Don't forget, a record label is really just a name - but it is the driving force behind your band, and if you want to make it work, people have to know you, so that means going to music events, festivals, concerts, etc., and making band promotion your mantra.

Having your own record label, then, means that you improve your own band's reputation by association. It also means that you create your own local music community with other independent musicians, and that you benefit from each other's knowledge, know-how, and resources. Indie music has always been at the forefront of musical change - with bands often one step ahead of the crowd. Owning your own record label puts you two steps ahead of the crowd.