



Social Media in the Careers of Independent Musicians.

BEATS AND TWEETS

“Digital entrepreneurs”

- Recently completed project (with Jo Haynes):
‘Digital entrepreneurs: negotiating commerce and creativity in the ‘new’ music industry.
- Today’s talk:
 - Background to the project
 - Theme 1: Musicians’ understandings of the role of social media





Background 1: creative labour

- Flourishing area of academic interest. Key themes:
 - Insecurity
 - Autonomy
 - Creative labourer as ideological emblem of contemporary labour conditions
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Background 2: the music industry

- Two competing narratives
 - Disaster and decline
 - Music undervalued
 - No money for investment/development
 - Opportunity and freedom
 - Artists can access fans directly
 - Internet breaks down geographic restrictions
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Aims of the project

- How do changes in the music industry connect to themes in creative labour literature?
- What is working experience like for musicians lower down the food chain?
- Sample – musicians signed to indie labels in South-West England. Scoping questionnaire (n44) followed by in-depth interviews (n10).



Using social media

- Why look at social media?
 - One of key pillars of discourses of ‘new’ music industry
 - Potential to blur work/leisure boundaries, perhaps intensifying work pressures
 - Maybe blurring of public/private, resulting in tensions regarding commodification of the self
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Survey responses on social media

Using Social Media has enabled me to make more money from my music

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	20	16	5	0

Using Social Media has enabled me to make money from my audience (other than selling music)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	10	18	12	1

Using Social Media has enabled me to reach new audiences

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15	22	6	0	0

Using Social Media has enabled me to establish relationships with music industry/media professionals that I couldn't access before

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12	19	4	4	2



Social media

- Musicians quite clear that social media plays a positive role for them...
 - ... But they are not exactly sure how, or what the role is.
 - No direct relationship between social media follows and income
 - Sceptical that social media publicity increased bums-on-seats
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Ineffective social media

“another example is we sold ten thousand records of [our second album] and we spent a tirelessly long time, lots of hours, trying to promote the fact that ‘everyone who[‘s going to buy the album] everyone please pre-order the album, help us get in the charts’. If everyone [who was going to buy it preordered] this new album then we would have been a top ten artist y’know and the exposure that comes from that is massive, a real game-changer. So, it’s frustrating to know that there’s ten thousand people out there that will want to buy our album and we’ve still used all of our capabilities, mailout, Facebook, Twitter, everything, telling everyone, but still only twenty percent of that audience actually gets round to pre-ordering or just ordering the album during the week. So, we’ll spend the whole time now going round saying..., meeting people at gigs saying ‘Oh, I didn’t realise you had your album out’, you know, and you have those conversations all the time, and it’s like ‘how’s that possible?’”

Social media within industry structures

- Consensus that biggest benefit was not connecting to audiences, but connecting to industry contacts.
- Social media an essential tool for networking.
- Getting high profile followers/retweets viewed as important.
- Social media seems important for extending musicians' social capital rather than increasing economic capital.

Social media within industry structures

- But...
 - Social media data becoming important criteria upon which musicians are evaluated
 - Social media companies beginning to charge for services
- ...Resulting in a reaction against social media, and increasing sense that new boss is much like the old boss.



Meet the new boss...

- “I see our Facebook page, the likes creep up, it’s tiny. The amount of time we’ve spent trying to get more likes and we just reach the same people you know unless you’re using the old model, the old industry model, which is paying money to promote your band, paying to get on radio, paying for advertising, that’s how The Killer’s get fifty million likes on Facebook because they’re a big group because they’ve got money behind them.”
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Project publications...

- Jo Haynes and Lee Marshall, 2017, 'Beats and Tweets: Social Media in the Careers of Independent Musicians'. *New Media and Society* (online first).
- Jo Haynes and Lee Marshall, 2017, 'Reluctant Entrepreneurs: Musicians and Entrepreneurship in the "New" Music Industry'. *British Journal of Sociology* (very soon to be online first...)