

FIVE IMPORTANT THINGS RECORD LABELS LOOK FOR

Written by Astral Plane Studios (August 2013)

Everyone today wants to be on a label, but are they actually prepared? Let's take a look at what today's artists are missing, diminishing chances for success.

When it comes to seeking a label deal, there are some important bases I'd say about 80% of artists are lacking, so I'll go over the top 5 aspects labels are looking for from you that you most likely don't have or think you've got.

Now don't get offended by that...If you can't handle some honesty or critique in general, you're going to have a rough time reaching the top.

I won't even be mentioning music here, that should be a given! If your music rocks then you've got one part of the puzzle complete. Just remember to quit copycatting other artists and be **UNIQUE**, though familiarity is a **GOOD** thing. Rap/hip-hop artists, quit using samples, especially if they aren't cleared.

Truth be told: Uncleared sampling is what's causing you not to earn money with your music. Stick to original exclusives and no leases. Will it cost more? Definitely. Will you benefit from it? Massively.

Now that that's off my chest, let's run down these 5 things record labels are looking for.

1. **Branding/Marketing**- Who are you to the world? Branding establishes a direct connection with the world. Not everyone uses their real name. Everyone mostly has some sort of moniker they go by. This is a simple way to think about branding. What's also included in branding is your image...Your haircut, clothes you wear, what you represent basically.

If you have neither of these, why is a label going to be interested either? A proper marketing plan is important as well since it's direct communication with your audience. Social media should definitely be included in your marketing plans. Feel free to contact me to schedule times for my music marketing classes; they'll do a lot for you.

2. **Sales/Draw**-This is why branding/marketing is number 1 because without it, you surely can't attempt this one. Labels want to know you can sell units (songs) on your own, without their help. Numbers matter a ton. Giving away 40,000 downloads impresses nobody. Earn money and stop cutting yourselves short with the \$5 albums.

Keep solid records of ALL sales, both gross and net from singles, albums and merchandise because it's going to do a ton for you in the future when seeking a label or should one approach you.

Draw means fanbase, it's that simple. How many fans do you have? How many people are coming to your shows?

Make sure to get a head count from ticket sales and if the door person isn't counting heads, tell them they're not doing their job right. You should have a relatively consistent number -- add up how many shows you've done that month and take an average. You'll want that number to grow, yes twitter/Facebook do count for draw.

3. **Touring**- How often are you playing shows? Where are you playing them? Have you been invited out of state? This all stems from draw, and I see artists taking ANY show...for ANY

pay...oftentimes none.

Play at the venues who will treat you right monetarily, free beer and drinks aren't pay, they're a way for venues to continue stifling musicians, put that foot down.

This may mean you'll have to get a booking agent but it will do wonders for you as they can generally get you into the best spots for fair compensation. Be touring as often as possible, if you can get 10 shows a month you do it.

4. Sonic Quality- How's that album sound? Does that snare pop enough? Got depth? How about powerful drums? More often than not your mixes aren't label quality, they're probably more on the dull, cold, digital sounding side which works for certain genres, but not for much involving actual instruments.

\$75 mixes get you nowhere, the cheapest deals get you nowhere, neither do the masking, balance and phase issues that go along with them. Like it or not you have to spend money to make it in this industry. A sub par mix/master is obvious and you can be denied solely on this alone.

Invest in your mixes/masters, the result will beam a gigantic smile across your face and ears as well as fans and A&Rs. If you want to impress people, feel free to contact me for label quality mixing.

Truthful tidbit #2: Your friends "learning" to mix via youtube don't know what they're doing and neither do you. If you can't afford to record/mix/master an album, release an EP or a single instead. It's about the QUALITY, not the QUANTITY. Demos don't exist anymore.

5. Attitude- Believe it or not, attitude matters, you can be a rude person and watch it get you nowhere or you can be a firm person, put your poker face on and do some negotiations and talking. A good entertainment lawyer helps too, but before you get to needing him/her put YOU/your group across first along with your goals, what you seek and what you DON'T seek from a label. Don't hop on the first deal that comes your way, if you're not a match, another place WILL be.

Always keep these 5 aspects in mind when thinking about your goals. Never forget quality first either. Keep pushing forward and you will find success in the industry, stick with those who have the EXPERIENCE to help you in every way to become a better musician or band, don't be the type that uses others because it WILL come back to bite you.

Astral Plane Studios (APS) is a sound production service located in Temple, TX dedicated to professional audio production ? created by mix engineer Josh Hayward, a graduate of Mediatech Institute in Austin, TX for recording arts and music business. Josh Hayward was trained amongst the best at Arlyn Studios by those who have worked with Willie Nelson, Prince, Lyle Lovett, The Black Crowes and more. At Astral Plane Studios', your sonic sculpture is their prime concern. APS offers you peace of mind with data protection and unrivaled creativity in your music.

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