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# MANAGERS

## THE NEW BREED

By Bernard Baur

Managers have always played a significant role in an artist's career. Their guidance and direction can often make the difference between success and failure. But management is a tough gig, and over the past few years it has become even tougher. With the music business in a state of flux, today's managers function almost like a record label. Their responsibilities are greater than ever and their vision must be broader. To provide you with a better a handle on the responsibilities of one of the most important team members an artist will ever have, *Music Connection* talked with four distinctly different managers and an artist who has had seven managers.

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### THE MANAGERS

Artist managers come from all walks of life and must possess a variety of skill sets; no single background produces a good manager. And, they all exercise different management styles; some are aggressive while others are mellow. So long as they get the job done and relate with you well, however, you should have a long and prosperous relationship. Here are four examples of distinctive management styles:

#### -- The Business Major

Ryan Singer graduated college with a business degree. Afterwards, he handled marketing for Nike and snowboard manufacturers. That allowed him to work with the Vans Warped Tour. Eventually his love of music led him to management. Singer has been a manager for four years and is currently managing the L.A. band Malbec, producer Richard Gibbs, Josh The Goon, and DJ Goldfingers.

## -- The Former Artist

For over 20 years Alex Kravetsky made his living as a singer, dancer and actor. He toured the country and played with superstars. Later he became a contractor with his own company. Today, as a partner in 79 Volts Management, he co-manages acts with his son Josh Weesner. Their primary focus is a young band called Starving For Gravity.

## -- The Ex-A&R Rep

Bruce Flohr was an A&R rep for 12 years at RCA Records. He signed the Dave Matthews Band, among others. Flohr reports that he acted as manager for many acts on the label's roster, either because they had no management or had ineffectual management. He's now an executive at Red Light Entertainment and an A&R rep for ATO Records. He works with Dave Matthews, Alanis Morissette, Chris Cornell, and Ben Harper.

*"The reality is that it's much more than just the music and a great show today. That's not enough anymore."*

—Alex Kravetsky, manager

## -- The Visionary

Mike Gormley has always been ahead of the curve. He has worked for major labels, founded an indie label, been a music supervisor, and is on the board of the Music Managers Forum. Gormley has worked with acts as diverse as Oingo Boingo, the Bangles, Concrete Blonde, the New York Dolls, and Lowen & Navarro. Today he is a partner in Yes Dear Entertainment, handling the careers of Quincy Coleman and Simon Lyng.

## TODAY'S NEW MANAGEMENT

While business acumen is an important element of effective management, a manager must also be imaginative. Ryan Singer discovered exactly that when he started working with bands. "It's good to know basic principals, like supply and demand, but in today's music industry you have to be much more creative in your approach. An artist can't rely on one thing C not a label, not a sponsor, not even a manager." In today's environment, Singer believes artists and management have to work together to create as many opportunities as possible.

Because of his background, Singer focused on moneymaking opportunities, like placements. To that effect, he hooked up Malbec with well-known producers and secured a publishing deal for the band. That garnered the band a stream of synch placements in TV and film projects. The band's lead singer even sang in a national commercial for Fruit of the Loom, which got more exposure for Malbec. Singer relates, "Today, you have to do everything you can to get your music out there, and be heard above all the noise."

Alex Kravetsky knows that all too well. He brought a young band from the Midwest to California and began working with them. Although his background as an artist helps him understand performers, he says, "The reality is that it's much more than just the music and a great show today."

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*"There's a new breed of managers. These are the pros who really rock your world. They're exciting, enthusiastic and creative. They have vision and passion. And most importantly, they include you in the decision making process."*

—Jeanie Cunningham, artist

Kravetsky contends, "You must have a vision of where you think the act belongs. Then," he adds, "you have to build a team that will get you there." Like Singer, he also brought in a producer to help the band focus its sound. "After that," according to Kravetsky, "we had to build a 'story.'" Consequently, Starving For Gravity have become internet radio stars, with over 360,000 views and almost 250,000 plays on their MySpace site.

Story building is one of Mike Gormley's specialties. In fact, he has done it for years. For a manager like Gormley, things haven't changed that dramatically. Twenty-five years ago, he helped the Bangles achieve a national profile and radio airplay PP before they were signed. "I always thought managers should focus on marketing and try to establish international careers," he says. "It's not that much different today. But, because there are so many independent acts, and labels, trying to do the same thing, it's more work now." That's the reason, Gormley explains, "Artists have to pitch in and work at it too."

Getting everyone on the same page, and excited about it, are a couple of the most important things a manager can do. That's exactly what Bruce Flohr did as an A&R rep. "There are a lot of similarities between managers and A&R," Flohr contends. "Even when an act had strong management, I had to make sure that every department was doing its best, while keeping my eye on the big picture. You have to do more than simply support your artists, you have to be a champion for them," he states.

With his unique perspective, Flohr believes, "Management today is saddled with even more work. Managers have to take on more tasks to create an in-frastructure for their acts, because labels won't do that. You have to handle marketing, promotions and sales plans. Basically, you have to do what labels used to do." Indeed, Flohr claims, "Management is what labels hope to be. They just haven't figured it out yet."

## **NOW IT'S ABOUT TEAMWORK**

Every manager we spoke with talked about teamwork. They said no one can achieve success alone. According to the managers quoted for this article, all of their artist take an active role in career development. Although it's common for one or two band members to shoulder most of the burden, managers today are divvying up the work. Singer says, "To get what we want will take a big effort, and it should be a group effort." As a result, every member of Malbec has a role, from booking to mailing packages to website maintenance.

“Everyone does something to help the group,” he confirms.

***“Smart managers today will associate with a larger firm — one that has a staff. There’s so much to do, you need the manpower.”***

**—Bruce Flohr, manager**

Kravetsky and Gormley are both big on building teams C teams that not only include artists, but contacts too. “Getting the right people involved is very important,” Gormley notes. “There are so many areas to cover today, one person can’t do it all.

“We couldn’t have done as much by ourselves,” Kravetsky agrees. “We’re fortunate that we met some good professional people early on.” In addition, Kravetsky also assigns duties to each band member. “We have a rule that anyone who leaves a comment on MySpace has to be contacted by a band member. And that relationship has to be maintained on a regular basis.”

Veterans like Flohr also like artists who are active. “Everyone has to do his or her part today,” he says. That’s why I’m attracted to artists who are not simply playing music, but are *in business*.”

## **CHOOSING & CHANGING MANAGERS**

It appears that management has become more of a democratic process, where everyone including the artists has a say and a job. Because of that change in dynamics, it is crucial to choose the right manager. And, you may have to do that more than once, because very few acts retain the same rep throughout their career.

According to artist Jeanie Cunningham, “When I first started out, the manager called the shots.” So much so, that sometimes it got out of hand. She recalls, “I had one manager tell me, ‘Do not question my authority!’ Then, he became abusive.” That manager proceeded to chip away at her confidence, commission gigs she obtained herself, and eventually absconded with \$20,000 given to her by an investor.

Cunningham speaks from experience. She has been a singer, songwriter and performer for almost 30 years, sharing the stage with Ike Turner, David Crosby and Lionel Richie, to name a few. She recently returned from a European tour and currently produces music and videos for corporations. She is also the producer and host of *The Composers Corner*, a site where new and seasoned artists can learn about music and business. Cunningham has had seven managers during her long career C some good, some bad, and some exciting. She even managed herself for seven years.

Cunningham believes the key to finding the right manager, and making it work, is knowledge. “Artists have to be savvy nowadays. They need to know about the business, be aware of their rights and what to expect from a manager.” In that regard, Cunningham has placed all of her managers into one of three categories that most artists will run into at one time or another.

“There are the good ones,” she admits. “Somebody you can’t live without during certain phases of your career.” There are the toxic ones, too. “They’re like a bad case of herpes,” she suggests, “not life threatening, but very irritating.” And, finally, there are the exciting managers. “These are the pros who really rock your world. They’re exciting, enthusiastic and creative. They’re a new breed with vision and passion. And, most importantly, they include you in the decision making process.”

Even if you’re lucky enough to find an exciting manager, however, success could change the type of management you need. Breaking through, getting signed, or any substantial event in your career will create more work C sometimes too much. Today, with so many aspects to take care of, a single manager may not be able to do it all.

“When your act gets signed the real work begins,” Gormley declares. “Even though one person at the label may like the artist, the rest of the label doesn’t always know who that artist is.” After a signing, Gormley explains, it gets much more serious, because there’s a lot more pressure.

Flohr asserts that because a lone manager can do so much on his own today, “Anything you get from a label is a bonus.” When a career explodes, however, and an act starts taking off, Flohr advises, “Smart managers today will associate with a larger firm C one that has a staff. There’s so much to do, you need the manpower.”

## **THE REWARDS**

People who want to be managers in today’s C and tomorrow’s C music business have their work cut out for them. The managers we spoke to report that they work 12-hour days on a regular basis. They’re on the phone, on the internet and constantly thinking of new ways to promote and market their acts, both online and off. It can be a 24/7 gig, with little rewards, at least in the beginning. Indeed, Singer declares, “If you expect to get wealthy managing an unsigned band, you’re insane.”

Nonetheless, the new generation of managers wouldn’t have it any other way. “Today, artists and managers don’t need a record deal to be successful,” Flohr affirms. “With the right manager, you can control your own destiny to a great extent. You can make things happen and create opportunities. Your only limit is imagination, and stamina.”

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# 15 QUESTIONS ARTISTS SHOULD ASK POTENTIAL MANAGERS

Don't be afraid to ask questions when talking with a potential manager. Not only should you find out if you're both on the same page and have the same vision for your career, but you should also find out how the manager handles business. Below are 15 questions that our sources suggested.

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## 1. "Who do you know?"

The music business is based on relationships and connections. Effective managers have a wide network of contacts that can be tapped whenever needed.

## 2. "What's your game plan?"

Without a marketing plan you won't have much success. This is a critical factor and prospective managers should display some expertise in this area.

## 3. "What are your goals?"

A manager should have short-term and long-term goals that are part of a larger marketing and promotions plan. Short-term goals could be weekly or monthly, so long as they advance your career.

## 4. "Do you love my music?"

It is a business, but you still need people who love your music. Besides, if they're passionate about it they'll work harder.

## 5. "What will you do when things aren't going well?"

It's all strawberries and cream when everything's clicking, but what happens when things go south? It takes a real manager to handle problems promptly and efficiently. Ask for examples based on their experience.

## 6. "Who have you managed?"

Check the manager's roster -- current and past. You should contact prior clients to see what they have to say. But, don't ask for references from the manager. You'll only get those that rave about the services.

## 7. "What's your track record?"

Does the manager have any notable successes? How about failures? Ask for examples.

8. "Do you have enough time to devote to my act?"

The best managers are often busy and may have more than one client. It's important to find out if they have the time to give you the attention you need.

9. "How big is your staff?"

If a manager is handling several clients, you need to know how the work will be done.

10. "How vigilant are you about money?"

A manager who doesn't keep track of income and expenses can cause big problems. They should be eager to go after money that's owed you, or have someone on call who will do it for them. Additionally, a manager should watch expenses carefully.

11. "Will your commissions be based on gross or net?"

There's a huge difference. If a manager will only commission gross income (income before expenses are deducted), they're probably a dinosaur, and will sometimes make more than you. Modern managers will frequently commission net proceeds (income minus expenses), or split between net and gross commissions depending on the revenue stream.

12. "What do YOU expect me to do?"

Make sure you're clear about what the manager expects from you. If it's very little, beware. Real managers expect you to work as hard as they do, and should have a list of things they expect you to do.

3. "Is it all right if I meet with other managers before making a decision?"

Competent and confident managers don't mind if you talk with other prospects. In fact, they'll often suggest it. If a manager gets angry about this question, or bad-mouths other people, be cautious.

14. "What do you know about me (and my act)?"

Good managers will Google you before meeting with you. If they don't, it tells you something about the way they conduct business. Information is power. By the way, you should Google them as well.

15. "Are you aware that I'm gay?"

Anything that could affect your career should be out in the open. It can make a difference in how a marketing plan is designed and implemented. By bringing it up, you can also tell if the manager has any problems with it.

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