

The perils of Getting “signed”

Many artists and bands often feel that getting signed by or being offered a recording contract is the ultimate goal to their musical ambitions. In some cases this can be true but generally it can be the start of a whole new bunch of problems that no musician would ever foresee.

These days a recording contract is nothing more than a big advance of money to be recouped by the recording company thru sales of your product. If it doesn't sell to expectation you still have to pay the money back somehow. It is not just left at that. It is no different than going to a bank and getting a loan to market your music your self, except the recording companies has the methods to make the product sell, get airplay and distribute the product throughout the country or even the world.

If you can get a recording company to get behind your music, that's good. But beware of recording companies who try to influence and change your sound, often to the point of rewriting your songs and even changing members of your band or worse still, forcing you to record songs of other peoples that you don't like.

Here are some horror stories that can happen to musicians who get 'signed' and think they are 'made'

getting shelved!

A band get signed; get some money advanced for recording. The songs are recorded and completed but

the record company 'shelves' your act...it never sees the light of day but you can't take your product anywhere else because

You are already signed. Often you can't even play live gigs without giving a % of your performance fee to the record company

#what happened to my song?

Often you will be all ready to record your songs the way you want and the record company will bring in a co writer or producer who alters your compositions beyond all recognition to 'fit in with label's style'. You started make a hard rock album and you end up with a rap album with all your instruments removed and samples replacing them. Then you have to go and promote something you really hate and your product is not longer recognizable

#where did all the money go?

Beware the big advance of money, to make and promote your music. If it doesn't sell you will have to pay the money back, with interest, just like the banks. How do you pay it back? Live gigs, touring, radio shows, shopping centres etc for the next ten years...believe me this has happened to many aussie acts in the last 20 years.

#where did my band go?

Quite often musical differences between band members and record companies are solved by the company getting rid of and replacing any member of the band who doesn't agree with them. They are always trying to get 'work' for their own players and artists who have already been signed. Quite often you will find all your guitars players work re recorded by the studio guy or 'producer'

#I thought I was a muso not a soapie star?

Increasingly recording companies are trying to “cross media” any act in anyway they can. They will market you anyway they can, and they will get you to do things to increase your and their exposure any way you can. You may end up on dog food commercial or in big brother or, god forbid, on Australian idol. Many recording companies are just offshoots of the big media groups who control TV, radio, music, and the print media, and they will market you anyway they see fit to re coup their investment in you.

Remember the music business is 5% music and 95%.business!!!!!!

So!!!!

Get a good lawyer

Try to go independent if you can

Market your self on the web and build your own presence in the world.

The more successful you are in the beginning to more bargaining power you have with the recording companies!

Know what you are signing if you get offered a contract!