

IT'S A LONG TAIL TO THE TOP (IF YOU WANNA ROCK 'N' ROLL)?

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Abstract

The real role of the internet in the meteoric rise of the Arctic Monkeys, Sandi Thom and Lily Allen to international prominence has been the subject of considerable debate in the music and media industries. Whether or not such success stories represent a change in the way popular music artists are raising their profile with audiences and music consumers has been addressed by limited ethnographic studies overseas. With reference to a qualitative study, this paper explores the promotional patterns of 10 high profile Australian popular music practitioners in the so-called liberal-democratic age of the internet. The study provides a comparison of the perceived importance of traditional media avenues (print, broadcast and their internet counterparts) and various online media in the promotion of these artists including The Angels, The Audreys, Eskimo Joe and the Hilltop Hoods. The paper specifically addresses Anderson's Long Tail marketing theory (2006) and its relevance to an artist's promotional strategies. It reinforces the perception that 'new' media online complement 'old' media avenues rather than supersede them. The paper argues that within the context of the Australian contemporary music industry, a musician's marketing repertoire should include a mix of mainstream, traditional media and online promotional avenues. Finally, it examines how different media/promotional combinations are employed by several Australian artists to secure a place in Australia's music industry.

Introduction

If the music press is to be believed, U.K. 'indie'¹ sensation the Arctic Monkeys' early success was not due to an innovative record company marketing campaign, but the product of free online distribution (BBC, 2006). The band's meteoric rise in less than a year was reportedly due to them giving away recordings of 'demos' to fans at early gigs. Unbeknownst to the band, these limited edition tracks were dispersed readily as free downloads by music-sharing fans online (Dockrill, 2006 and Hau, 2007). Dockrill (2006) asserts that the media were intrigued by the band's online popularity, resulting in the Monkeys' first album, *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, becoming England's fastest-selling debut album ever. Dockrill (2006) concludes that while the Monkeys' music is still shared online illegally by fans, it is more likely people become acquainted with the band through the attention of mainstream media.

The difficulty in accessing mainstream media for artist promotion in Australia and a burgeoning Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture for which the internet is becoming a key tool have been well documented (Ausmusic, 1993; Hearn et al. 2004, p. 33; Homan, 2003; Homan and Johnson, 2003; Ninan, Oakley and Hearn, 2004, pp. 8–9). The U.S. documentary *Before the Music Dies* (Rasmussen and Shapte, 2006) features Eric Clapton, Elvis Costello, Bonnie Raitt and other luminaries who assert that the internet provides an easier and cheaper avenue to record, promote and deliver their work.

¹ The term 'indie' (independent) is used to describe a broad musical style, related acts and record labels primarily equated with alternative music and authenticity, and diametrically opposed to a stereotyped mainstream (Shuker, 2002, pp. 170-171). Indie record labels are independent from the majors (at least in terms of the productive and creative process of artist acquisition and promotion), though still often reliant on a major for distribution (ibid). These labels are frequently considered to be more flexible and innovative in their roster of artists and have often been associated with the emergence of new genres (ibid).

The manager of Austrade's Los Angeles Australian Music Office, Tony George (2007), advises in the age of niche broadcasting and narrowcasting, rarely does the same formula work twice for artists trying to break into music markets. It is this lack of clarity that has been reiterated in recent years at music industry conferences around Australia, which provides the stimulus for the study reported in this paper. Indeed, cynicism prevails in international contexts about the online 'discoveries' of acts such as the Arctic Monkeys and Lily Allen. In the case of Sandi Thom, Cullen (2007) observes that most industry personnel regard such stories as a mainstream media myth that serves as a novel news angle:

Everybody sort of says 'Yeah isn't that great she broke on the internet?' but I don't know that anybody has ever met anybody or spoken to somebody who first heard about her on the internet. We all first heard about her because the press told us that she was using the internet.

Similar arguments have been made for Australian band Sick Puppies' *Free Hugs* video which George (2007) describes as a 'viral phenomenon ... leading to a major deal with Virgin Records'. Cullen (2007) argues that while the video received millions of views on YouTube, it was word-of-mouth and traditional media driving people to the new media more so than people 'just stumbling across it'.

It is important, then, to investigate the true influence of new media and promotional forms. My research aimed to identify the ways that traditional media (print, broadcast and their online counterparts) and the internet are utilised by Australian popular music artists to gain industry and public recognition; and identify how media are engaged at different stages of artistic careers (artists are defined here as either 'emerging', 'breakthrough' or 'established').

Two key findings stem from the research. Firstly, while online promotion and distribution pathways are constantly increasing and changing, and Anderson's popular 'Long Tail' marketing theory has crept into the music marketing vernacular, their real value in current music artist promotion remains nebulous. Secondly, the need to provide clarification is diluted by the apparent continued importance of traditional media avenues and promotional practices which remain essential in the promotional mix.

Music-media gatekeepers

In her address at the 2000 Digital Hollywood Online Entertainment Conference, American music artist Courtney Love stated her views on the growing importance of the new online frontier:

Being the gatekeeper was the most profitable place to be, but now we're in a world half without gates. The Internet allows artists to communicate directly with their audiences; we don't have to depend solely on an inefficient system where the record company promotes our records to radio, press or retail and then sits back and hopes fans find out about our music ... Digital distribution gives everyone worldwide, instant access to music. And filters are replacing gatekeepers. (Love, 2000)

McIntyre (2004, p. 204) asserts that media operatives form a significant part of the social organisation or field (Bourdieu, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) that vets popular music itself. They are important gatekeepers (Hirsch, 1970; McQuail, 1994; Negus, 1996, p. 67) in the flow of music information, and comprise one of the critical sites of social validation in the creative process (McIntyre 2004, p. 204).

Realising the one-way 'flow' of material limitation of the gatekeeping concept, Negus, after Bourdieu, prefers the phrase 'cultural intermediary' whose role is 'a series of interactions and mediations as people in particular occupations connect together and play an active part in the production, distribution and social consumption of popular music' (Negus 1996, p. 67). McIntyre (2004, p. 204) further argues:

Radio, television and the press are not only sites of struggle and contestation over the meanings of popular music but are themselves integral sites of cultural evolution and, as such, are integral components of the creative process and significant mediators of the domain of popular music.

Furthermore, McGuire (cited in McQuail, 2005, p. 471) suggests that information originating from an 'authoritative', 'credible' and 'familiar' source will be more effective with audiences. The question is, are new 'gatekeepers' emerging online, and if so, do they contain these qualities, and are they known to music audiences?

New media — online usurper or add-on?

McQuail (2005, p. 138) states the traditional forms of mass media have so far survived, and suggests the 'new electronic media' can be viewed initially as an addition to the existing spectrum rather than as a replacement. The advantages of the internet or 'new' digitally networked media over the 'old' have been well documented (Bentivegna cited in McQuail 2005, p. 151; Burnett and Marshall cited in Spurgeon 2008, p. 4; McQuail, 2005; Poster, 1999, p. 15; Spurgeon 2008, p. 4). New media has been further enhanced with the development of Web 2.0, a supposedly upgraded version of Web 1.0. Popularised by Tim O'Reilly (2005), Web 2.0 applications can be characterised by:

- architecture that facilitates participation and interactivity (Roberts, 2007). The internet platform can not only be used as a tool for promotion and selling, but as a service interface, facilitating advertiser and consumer participation and interaction (Spurgeon 2008, p. 14).
- the continuous, seamless and rapid updating of software and data (Roberts, 2007).
- micro-markets rather than mass-markets (Spurgeon 2008, p. 14).
- a disregard for the mass media model and the associated 'push' techniques of advertising (Spurgeon 2008, p. 14).

Examples of Web 2.0 applications include wikis; music-sharing sites such as Napster; blogging; social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook; video-sharing sites such as YouTube; mashups; tagging ('folksonomies'); photo-sharing sites such as flickr; and Amazon.com, Google and AdSense (O'Reilly, 2005).

Spurgeon (2008, p. 14) asserts sales in micro-markets are cumulatively more valuable than sales in mass-markets and suggests these Web 2.0 features have been popularised by *Wired* journalist Chris Anderson (2004) as the 'Long Tail' of the network economy.

The long tail

Author of 'The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More' (2006), Chris Anderson describes the niche strategy of businesses that sell a large number of unique items, each in relatively small quantities. Anderson's central thesis is that niche markets are the key to the future for internet sellers, predicting that the internet economy would shift from a relatively small number of 'hits' — mainstream products — at the head of the demand curve toward a 'huge number of niches in the tail'. The low distribution and inventory costs of these businesses allow them to realise significant profit out of selling small volumes of hard-to-find items to many customers, instead of only selling large volumes of a reduced number of popular items. The demographic that purchases a large number of 'non-hit' items is the demographic called the Long Tail (Anderson, 2006).

The benefit of the Long Tail marketing strategy is its ability to treat consumers as individuals, offering mass customisation as an alternative to mass-market fare. Anderson (2006) suggests successful internet businesses such as eBay (auctions), Yahoo! and Google (web search), Amazon (retail) and iTunes Store (music and podcasts) have leveraged the Long Tail in their business strategies. Google makes most of its money off small advertisers (the long tail of advertising) while eBay does so through niche and one-off products. Anderson (2006) asserts that to build a market

and obtain revenue from the consumer demographic of the Long Tail, businesses need to implement a series of new media marketing techniques that extend the reach of marketing to the low-frequency, low-intensity consumer in a cost effective way.

Anderson outlines three guiding principles to achieving a successful Long Tail strategy which he describes as ‘the new rules of the entertainment economy’:

- (1) **Make everything available:** Almost anything is worth offering on the off chance it will find a buyer. This is the antithesis of the way the entertainment industry has traditionally operated whereby the decision whether to release a product is based on estimates of demand among other limitations (Anderson, 2006).
- (2) **Cut the price in half and lower it again:** The lesson is to pull music consumers down the tail with lower prices (Anderson, 2006). Artists are applying this principle via the traditional and/or mainstream media (e.g. Radiohead released an album online for which fans could pay any price (Nichols 2008); and Prince gave away an album, also, via a traditional mainstream medium — a British tabloid newspaper (Nichols, 2008)). Locally, artists are providing free downloads to consumers which are profiled and available via traditional media avenues such as Triple J (ABC, 2009).
- (3) **‘Help me find it’:** consumers need a ‘familiar point of entry’, a ‘known quantity from which further exploring’ can begin. This principle has been adopted by several successful online avenues including net radio sites such as Pandora.com, iLike.com, Last.fm and Qloud.com (Gilbertson, 2006) and e-tailers such as Rhapsody.com that include lists of ‘similar artists’, ‘followers’ and ‘influencers’ with every artist search. Sites such as Amazon.com do this via collaborative filtering which uses browsing and purchasing patterns of users to guide those who follow them (‘customers who bought this also bought ...’) (ibid).

McQuail’s conclusion that ‘it is not easy to become famous on the Internet, without the co-operation of the traditional mass media’ (2005, p. 139) is reinforced by the findings of the study reported in this paper. While music artists can apply new media promotional strategies and the Long Tail principles, mainstream media continues to play a role in providing a ‘familiar point of entry’ to music consumers, Long Tail or otherwise, in the ever-expanding online environment.

MA project

It is the ongoing preoccupation of the news media, music industry personnel and my colleagues in the music field with the question as to the true value of online promotion for Australian popular music artists that prompted me to undertake research to test the literature debates.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted over a three month period from February to May 2007, with a purposive sample of 10 participants that included high-profile popular music artists and music industry professionals in Australia. Participants were categorised into two groups: popular music artists (or their manager), accepted by peers, the public and the industry as ‘successful’ (Group 1); and music industry professionals recognised by their peers and the public as ‘experts’ and commentators in their field (Group 2).

Group 1	Group 2
▪ John Brewster (guitarist/composer, The Angels); ▪ PJ Murton (manager, the Hilltop Hoods); ▪ Taasha Coates and Tristan Goodall (The Audreys); ▪ Catherine Haridy (manager, Eskimo Joe); ▪ Gordon Andersen (manager, Mere Theory, Industry Development Officer, Ausmusic South Australia); and ▪ Myles Mayo (guitarist/vocalist, Special Patrol).	▪ Sebastian Chase (founder and managing director, MGM Distribution, former manager of Dragon, The Reels and Rose Tattoo, former label owner of Rooart and Phantom Records); ▪ Bill Cullen (managing director, One Louder Management for artists including Sarah Blasko, Kate Miller-Heidke, End of Fashion, Paul Kelly and The Drones); ▪ Jo Bell (Brisbane publicist, proprietor/creator of Brispop.com); and ▪ Daniel Randell (manager, Ausmusic South Australia, lead singer of Fighter Pilot).

Participants in Group 1 were asked to complete a questionnaire and participate in a semi-structured interview designed to canvas artists' career paths, marketing strategies and patterns of traditional and online media coverage. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to review the type of media attention received throughout the 'emerging', 'breakthrough' and 'established' stages of their career. They were also asked to describe the breakthrough 'milestone' of their career, where they considered they had 'made it', and provide a list of experiences that indicated 'success'. A final requirement was to evaluate the media exposure received throughout each of these three career stages, including the ease of accessibility of each to artists as a tool for promotion and how often they featured in each, and indicate whether they deemed it instrumental to their success. The media sites examined included:

Table 1: Traditional media and online promotional sites

Traditional media avenues (broadcast, print)	Online avenues
Radio (community) Radio (commercial) Radio narrowcasters (e.g. college radio) Public television (ABC, SBS) Pay television Free-to-air television Street press Newspapers (regional) Newspapers (capital city) Newspapers (national) Magazines (music) Magazines other Fanzines	Music artist's website Blogs Podcasting Webzines Internet radio Online discussion groups Social networking sites Music industry websites Other (respondent to provide details)

Participants in Group 2 were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview only. Questions related to the individuals' career paths and industry trends in promoting popular music artists. Information was also gained from several panelists at two major music industry events including the 2006 Big Sound conference held in Brisbane, Queensland; and the Fuse Festival 2007 held in Adelaide, South Australia.

Artist rankings of traditional media and online sites

The over-arching finding is that a mixed marketing approach combining traditional media and online sites is the most potent in popular music promotion. While the research findings reinforce George's (2007) assertion that the promotional 'formula' differs from artist to artist, several avenues were consistently rated as the most crucial promotional tools throughout all stages of the participants' careers. Music artists' websites and the street press were identified as the most accessible and important to success, followed closely by ABC TV and Triple J, social networking sites and community radio.

An artist's website remains indispensable, despite the growing social networking site phenomenon. Haridy (2007) explains while Eskimo Joe's band site is managed by a third party, the band members are 'still fairly hands on', with guitarist Stuart MacLeod preferring to maintain a direct contact email address for his fans. Mayo (2007) attributes international interest in Special Patrol to the band's official website, with Planet Records in Brazil offering to release their music as part of a compilation under their label.

The street press were discussed at length by all participants, who suggested they remain easy to access as promotional tools for artists and crucial to their careers, even in the 'established' stage because of what Brewster (2007) terms their 'street credibility'. PJ Murton (2007) explains that the street press have been indispensable in raising the profile of the Hilltop Hoods, and says the medium was one of the stepping stones to commercial media attention. Chase (2007) argues that the street press are at the 'forefront of the development of Australian culture', and suggests magazines such as *Impress* and *Drum Media* write about players and events in the music industry long before anyone else is interested in them.

The importance of the government-owned and non-commercial ABC TV was associated with the broadcaster's commitment to support the arts, and consequent long term support for music programs, including *Countdown*, *rage*, and more recently *Spicks and Specks* on ABC1 and *triple j tv* on ABC2.

The popular ABC youth radio network, Triple J was touted as a valuable tool overall because of its national and global reach (via internet streaming) and dedication to 'Unearthing' independent artists. Cullen (2007) suggests that airplay on Triple J no longer produces the same results in sales as it used to, while Chase (2007) revealed that the station is often criticised as of limited value to some performers due to its youth charter. Nevertheless, Andersen (2007) states the network has been the key to the success of high profile acts such as Grinspoon, Silverchair, Missy Higgins, Xavier Rudd and John Butler. The prevailing sentiment of all participants can be summarised in Chase's observation:

It's a brilliant apparatus that you have to thank all governments for supporting ... it's such an important service to the country and to the art colony, particularly musicians. It has been a great feeder effect of generating live income. (Chase, 2007)

The value of social networking sites dominated discussions with participants suggesting that while a degree of uncertainty remains as to their effectiveness as pathways to popularity — partly because they are a relatively new phenomenon — their true value lies in their interactivity and high visibility with the public. This was largely attributed to their cross-promotion in the traditional/mainstream media, as is the case with MySpace, which is owned by News Corporation.

Community radio was considered by all participants as particularly valuable in the 'emerging' and 'breakthrough' career stages.

Artist relationships with traditional media promotion

Participants targeted all traditional media avenues listed in Table 1 in their promotional strategies to varying degrees, with the exception of fanzines, which are by nature niche and genre-specific; and

narrowcasting terrestrial radio (college radio for example, is not a strong component of popular music culture in Australia as it is in the U.S.). Traditional media (broadcast, print and online counterparts) were consistently rated as essential to the artists' success throughout all career stages but were identified as the hardest in which to gain a consistent profile, particularly in the early and intermediate career stages.

However, while commercial radio remains a lucrative and powerful media form, the interviewees cited a number of promotional shortcomings: its commercial priorities; legislation that provides for only 25 per cent of airplay for contemporary music; and the propensity of many stations to play 'golden oldies'. Cullen (2007) has 'stopped being frustrated by commercial radio' in his efforts to promote artists such as Sarah Blasko, as commercial radio stations are 'in the business of selling advertising, not in the business of breaking new bands'. Nevertheless, Mayo (2007) states that Special Patrol has been 'lucky' to receive rotation on the Nova and Triple M networks around the nation. The band uses the print media as a stepping stone to getting radio airplay, with the latter giving the band 'credibility' and 'an edge' over other bands:

It's also the best form of advertising ... because it's four minutes of advertising space on national airwaves that is heard all around the country at the same time ... even people who aren't right into music have to listen to it for four minutes. (Mayo, 2007)

Similarly, commercial television was also perceived as a particularly lucrative, albeit difficult medium to access, and auxiliary to radio in terms of its value as a promotional tool.

Magazines were frequently identified as 'old school' by participants and industry panelists; paradoxically, key Australian cross-genre music webzines including *Mess+Noise.com.au*, *FasterLouder.com.au* and *accessallareas.com.au* barely received a mention. Newspapers similarly received a lukewarm response, although they remained valuable for targeted promotional campaigns to support live gigs and touring.

Alternative online promotion

The overall perception is that the online environment should be seen as an additional promotional tool to traditional media. Participants predominantly use online sites to keep up with consumer trends; reach out to what Vollmer et al. (2008, p. 13) term 'alpha-consumers'; establish closer contact with fans; and increase local, national and international networks with industry colleagues. The harnessing of online opportunities was limited to artist-generated content sites, including an artist's website and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook which were perceived as crucial to self-promotion. MySpace was predominantly discussed with little reference to other sites. It is now rivalled by Facebook which has since featured as a link on the websites of many of the artists interviewed, some of whom are also using the recently introduced Twitter to communicate with fans. Nevertheless Chase (2007) echoes the overall perception that 'music is actually taking people to MySpace — I don't think MySpace is really taking music to the people'.

The study revealed a heavier reliance on the same online opportunities in the 'emerging' career stage when traditional mass media avenues are less open to these artists. Fuse Festival 2007 panelists including proprietor of Usync, Daniel Simmons (2007) suggested that the online environment is becoming more important in the promotional mix as media practitioners are becoming more familiar with it.

Haridy (2007) highlights the networking advantages of these online arenas for Eskimo Joe that provide greater flexibility for international touring. Cullen (2007) believes it is difficult to quantify promotional success via the internet which features heavily in the marketing strategies of the major labels:

It's definitely a part of the mix that you would be mad to ignore. With the major labels we work with ... they are putting too much reliance on it. We get marketing plans that might be five pages but with one page of traditional type marketing and four pages of online ... I am just not

convinced ... it is all very well to have something on the front page of Ninemsn or whatever, shotgun pages ... [but] I just don't think it replaces anything yet.

A distinct disparity was evident between the (mainly U.S.) sites that dominate academic discussions of the 'digital shift', and those identified by the participants, which were comparatively limited. There was a lack of an intimate awareness by those interviewed of major/indie labels online; Web 2.0 tools such as online music distribution sites; peer-to-peer (P2P) downloading sites such as Limewire and Vuze; industry promoted products such as the interactive Usync and Music Glue that claim to turn 'friends' into 'fans'; YouTube; and virtual worlds such as Second Life. Second Life has been used as an avenue for exposure and revenue by emerging and established artists alike overseas, including Suzanne Vega and Duran Duran (Andrews, 2006).

Non-artist generated avenues including blogs, podcasts, webzines, internet radio, online discussion groups and music industry websites, were not actively pursued by the participants as promotional tools although they were aware they exist. Revenue generating sites such as online music distribution sites, or even major and indie label sites were not mentioned, which indicates a lack of recognition of these as promotional sources despite the fact that the music of all participants feature on such distribution sites. The majority of developments online are not actively pursued because they are thought to be too difficult to administrate, and there is little means to gauge their true value in terms of promotional power or generation of income.

The Audreys

The Audreys are a roots/folk rock band originating from Adelaide, South Australia. Founded by Taasha Coates and Tristan Goodall in 2004, the band has released two records including *Between Last Night and Us* (2006) and *When the Flood Comes* (2008). The first of these featured a cover of the INXS single 'Don't Change' which borrowing Anderson's (2006) terminology, provided a 'familiar point of entry' to the band's music then unknown to Australian audiences. Both records have won the ARIA Award for Best Blues and Roots Album. The Audreys are signed to ABC Music, Universal Music Australia and True North Records (Canada).

As an emerging band, The Audreys initially targeted community radio stations and the street press in Adelaide or in the towns to which they toured. Both Coates and Goodall impress the importance of becoming established in the local live scene first:

At the end of 2004 we'd only been together for six months, we came in at number two in the Top 100 on 3D radio. We were just out there getting ourselves known and heard. We did a lot of stuff with Radio Adelaide, 3D, local street press, people that were interested in local music. They were great, they were so supportive. It went much better than we hoped because now we have a national career. (Coates, 2007)

Coates and Goodall explain they have received considerable coverage in both the mainstream newspapers, music magazines such as *Rolling Stone*, and the street press. The band was very proactive in ensuring a presence in the local press, starting with the gig guide and regular submission of press releases to media outlets. Coates (2007) believes they received considerable editorial for their efforts, 'even if only 10 per cent got printed we still got them in the paper'. She stresses the importance of establishing and maintaining a solid business relationship with media publications:

The first time we ever went to Melbourne and did a gig, we got a press release printed in the local street press with a photo and we didn't have to pay for advertising. We'd sent it to them. They then emailed us back and said 'here's the advertising rates'. We replied we don't have the budget to support that for this tour, but we are planning on making Melbourne a big market, and we've since spent thousands of dollars on advertising with that same publication. But they didn't know that at the time, and we could have been just pissing in the wind ... they printed a press release and a photo [for] the first gig we ever did in Melbourne and just of a little local Adelaide band no one in Melbourne had ever heard of. (Coates, 2007)

Coates and Goodall emphasise the high level of support received from the street press but are coy on the subject of advertising and advertorials which they admit are sometimes necessary to guarantee exposure:

The first few times we went to Melbourne with the band, we were playing at venues for a fair bit of money but it was costing us to do the gigs. So we weren't spending a lot of money on advertising. We did get the rudimentary street press editorial, gig guide listings, sometimes we got little pieces, but if you want a [front] cover, if you want serious editorial, then you pay. (Goodall, 2007)

Coates stresses that a quid pro quo relationship exists, where the band ensures they give all press media 'something interesting to write about', such as a tour, new album or a special show:

We've spent a few years getting lots of editorial in the street press. Now we've come back and present shows with them where they're actually presenting your tour, where you pay a good amount, it costs a lot (estimates \$1000) but you get a decent sized ad, maybe a cover, their logo goes on the poster, and you get some editorial. It's very reciprocal. (Coates, 2007)

The band rarely receives commercial radio airplay with the exception of their first hit *Oh Honey*, which enjoyed respectable rotation. The Audreys attract substantial attention from ABC National to which they are affiliated through the ABC Music label. In particular, they have featured on Lucky Oceans' 'The Planet' show and Triple J, the latter which the band rates highly as a valuable avenue for exposure for Australian bands. Coates explains commercial radio is not targeted by the band as a main promotional tool:

If you're a realist in the music industry you'll say 'well, commercial radio stations need to sell advertising, that's how they make money'. They need to play music that's going to stop people changing stations so they'll listen to the ads. That's their only concern with programming; it's got nothing to do with art, it's got nothing to do with the local industry. (Coates, 2007)

Coates and Goodall express mixed emotions regarding the value of television (free-to-air and pay) as a promotional tool, primarily because of the difficulty in rating its true value in terms of actual product sales. The Audreys have appeared on pay TV, including Max TV (as part of the St Kilda Festival special) and Channel V. Coates has appeared on Spicks and Specks (April 11, 2007) and an Adelaide cooking show, while The Audreys have featured on Channel 9's *Mornings with Kerri-Anne*, and *Postcards; rage* on ABC1, *jtv* on ABC 2, and *DIG TV*; and a Channel 10 National Australia Day Concert which Coates describes as memorable:

We went down like a fart in an elevator on the Australia Day Concert. It was a free show so it was young families bringing their young kids who watch TV. So they were there for the Australian Idol performers. We finished our second song and there was just a deathly silence from 35,000 people. We just had to go 'thank you' and think about the people at home. We walked off the stage feeling 'that was really, really bad' ... No one in the audience knew who we are. It wasn't your Triple J audience. It was a Channel 10 audience. (Coates, 2007)

Despite the band's indifference to television exposure which Coates rates as less valuable than rotation on radio, she reveals the nationally televised event did result in a spike in the band's website and MySpace page hits and consequent album sales. The Audreys have also enjoyed exposure and more lucrative royalties with the band's songs featuring on *Rain Shadow*, a six-part drama series on the ABC filmed in Adelaide.

Coates (2007) stresses the continued importance of the journalist as a 'fan' and admits dealing with the media is a 'necessary evil' to attract punters to their shows. She explains the band's publicity is now handled through an in-house publicist at Warner that administers their ABC roots catalogue.

The Audreys online

The band identifies its key online promotional tools as their own website (<http://www.theaudreys.com.au>) and social networking sites, in particular, MySpace

(<http://www.myspace.com/theaudreysband>). The band's website has since included links to its pages on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Audreys/8728284434>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/theaudreys>) and its film clips are now available on YouTube. While Goodall and Coates view MySpace as *de rigueur* in the industry and an avenue of equal value to The Audreys' own website, Goodall explains the band receives more comments from fans through its MySpace page, than via the guestbook on the official website. The band views the interconnectivity and the mail list functionality of these sites as particularly advantageous, and Coates and Goodall highlight the importance of maintaining autonomy over the band's fan base, even when signed to a label. In Goodall's view, the traditional media is often a catalyst for online interest:

I don't think anyone discovers us through MySpace. I think people see us in the mainstream media and go and check us out on MySpace rather than discovering us on the internet. (Goodall, 2007)

Neither Coates nor Goodall (2007) cite other online avenues beyond the band's website and networking sites as of particular interest as promotional tools. Ad hoc interviews with online magazines were mentioned but neither could recall the names of the publications. The band is not active in generating or monitoring commentary in the blogosphere. Coates refers to blogs as conversations that were once reserved for the private sphere and best avoided, while Goodall describes them as 'information overload'.

While buzz marketing, or word-of-mouth, has found additional outlets online including social networking sites, Coates and Goodall (2007) echo the view of all my interview participants that face-to-face networking remains vital to a music artist's career. Coates explains the band were 'very slutty' about getting themselves seen in bars, venues, other band's gigs and music industry events. This is in keeping with the continuing emphasis on live gigging, touring and merchandising as the key sources of income for music artists in what APRA has recently labelled 'The Live Music Revolution' (APRA, 2009). Touring and live performance remains the number one preoccupation with the participants of this study. As Coates and Goodall (2007) explain, The Audreys must continue to 'tour the territory' to attract a fan base and local media attention and survive, even in the digital age. From local gigs around Adelaide, The Audreys later performed at the 2004 FUSE Festival and again at WOMADelaide as relative unknowns in 2005. Coates states while these shows 'didn't directly lead to anything' such appearances were instrumental in getting the band's name 'out there'. The band has toured internationally in both the U.S. and Canada which Coates reinforces is vital to securing overseas record deals and breaking into international markets.

Conclusion

My study of current and past Australian musicians' promotional methods can be taken as a snapshot of industry practices. Nonetheless, the attitudes of the high profile musicians, managers and other industry personnel I talked to reinforce the perceived importance of employing both traditional media and new media tools in the promotion of Australian popular music artists. Artists are predominantly targeting a combination of a limited range of online tools (their own website, and social networking sites) with traditional media avenues (ABC TV, Triple J, street press and community radio). While the former may not be fully harnessed, the formula has worked for them in an Australian music industry context.

Building on Anderson's (2006) assertion that new media marketing tools such as Web 2.0 products are essential to reaching the Long Tail demographic, these initial findings suggest that audiences in general are still being made aware of new music via traditional media avenues. There is arguably additional leverage to be gained by embracing a wider range of emerging online trends such as those used by artists overseas. An online presence is perceived as 'cutting edge' and provides familiarity and credibility with nonconformists and trendsetters, who see themselves at the forefront of popular culture trends and respect those artists on the cultural frontline with them. As Vollmer et al. (2008, p. 13) argue, there are distinct advantages to bypassing the traditional media and engaging

with these influential 'alpha consumers'. As the mass media recognises and reports these trends, rendering them 'familiar', 'authoritative' and 'credible', the mass consumer will follow.

Embracing Anderson's 'help me find it' principle, the 'push' of traditional mainstream media continues to create familiar entry points, luring would-be fans and consumers online where they can 'pull' further information about the artist and purchase products at leisure. This principle can be further applied to the implementation of a higher level of interactivity permitted by Web 2.0 developments on artist websites through links to applications such as MySpace and Facebook; YouTube (artist's channel); forums; terrestrial radio stations 'request a track' links; ticketing outlets; Second Life gigs; merchandise stores; industry websites; other artists' websites; and online distribution sites. Artists should not underestimate the ongoing value of maintaining their own website and should apply the Long Tail marketing principle of 'make everything available' (Anderson, 2006) by ensuring that a wide range of branded products are available for purchase online, specifically via their website and social networking site pages or links from these sites.

There is no doubt that considerable uncertainty and an ad hoc approach persists, as demonstrated in manager PJ Murton's assertion that 'If it doesn't hurt, do it!' (2007). Fuse Festival 2007 panelist and Music Glue director Mark Meharry (2007) highlights the prevailing view amongst industry commentators: that the role of the 'tastemakers' remains relevant regardless of the medium:

The promotion process is exactly the same as it has ever been. If you want to get out to a particular market, a key way of doing that is engaging the taste-making community. Those taste-making communities used to be press and radio, and TV to a degree. Now they exist online as well, so the process is the same, it is just different people.

Based on my research of recent Australian contexts, I believe it is unlikely that emerging online avenues will completely usurp the traditional tastemakers or gatekeepers, as prophesised by Love (2000). A more probable scenario is that music audiences will continue to seek information through 'familiar', 'credible' and 'authoritative' traditional and new media channels, such as those identified as most valuable by the research participants. The number of these promotional avenues available on the internet will continue to grow with the increasing convergence of gatekeepers online as popular music practitioners and audiences become more familiar with the internet platform. It is also more likely that emerging online avenues will continue to initially attract the trendsetters and gain familiarity over time with wider audiences through these familiar channels — as in the case of social networking sites via the traditional media — providing complementary sources of exposure. As such, Australian popular music artists are best advised to keep the Long Tail wagging by being aware of and embracing emerging online trends and not disembarking from the traditional media platforms, at least for the time being.

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INTERVIEWS

- John Brewster, co-founding member of the Angels, February 19, 2007.
- PJ Murton, band manager, Hilltop Hoods, March 7, 2007.
- Taasha Coates and Tristan Goodall, co-founding members of The Audreys, March 2, 2007.
- Catherine Haridy, band manager, Eskimo Joe, May 11, 2007.
- Gordon Andersen, band manager, Mere Theory and Industry Development Officer, Ausmusic SA, May 8, 2007.
- Myles Mayo, co-founding member of Special Patrol, February 6, 2007.
- Sebastian Chase, founder and managing director, MGM Distribution, April 27, 2007.
- Bill Cullen, managing director, One Louder Management for artists Sarah Blasko, Kate Miller-Heidke, End of Fashion, Paul Kelly and The Drones, March 29, 2007.
- Joanne Bell, Brisbane publicist, proprietor and creator of Brispop.com, April 5, 2007.
- Daniel Randell, manager Ausmusic SA and member of Fighter Pilot, May 23, 2007.