



THE ESSENTIAL YOUNG MUSICIANS GUIDE



Part 4 - Promotion & Touring

Part IV of the Forte Young Musicians Guide deals with the extra things that will help take your band to the next level. Over the past three editions now, we have looked at rehearsing, music equipment, recording and post production so in theory, now you should be sitting there with a copy of your newly mastered CD. So what to do now?

Well, you will need to package it up and get some copies made to sell, give away or send to people in the industry. No doubt you will have thought about this by now so you probably have a good idea of what you want the cover to look like. We advise that you find and hire the services of a professional graphic designer who will be able to assemble the art to size. Once done you send it off to the printers to get the copies made. Check out our billboard section over the page for some companies that specialise in CD packaging. This part is time consuming but fairly straight forward.

However, if your firing you demo at record labels and managers - a random CD from a band they have never heard of is not going to catch the eye of the record executive you are trying to impress. To really make a statement you need to put together a solid bio.

A bio is really just a short spiel on your band outlining its history, members and career highlights. Keep it short, snappy and entertaining.

However, for better or worse, the one thing that always catches the eye is the band photo. The photo can almost be described as the 'deal breaker'. This is

very, very important. A poor quality or amateurish photo instantly damages your chances of getting the CD put into the player in the first place - it's as simple as that.

However, a good quality photo instantly defines the band as a serious entity. It doesn't have to be serious photo as such - it just needs to be professionally shot.

Professional photographer Steve Mcrath from Rock Portrait Photography can likely outline why the photo is almost a make or break part of the whole process. We'll leave it to him to explain:

Why do I need a professional photographer?

If you are trying to promote your band would you publish poor quality live performance audio or a bad home demo to your Myspace page or band web site? I can hear many of you answering in the negative. Of course you wouldn't - theoretically. Many bands do exactly that because they believe it's better than presenting nothing at all. It's not - it will drive potential fans and booking agents away. The same principle applies to using quality images and therefore you shouldn't use photographs that look like they were shot by your mates if you're trying to impress your potential audience. You need to stand out from the crowd, and the best way to do that is visually. It's not easy to take high-energy images at a live gig - images

that really show the band in full flight and looking like they are rocking the house. Asking a friend who happens to own expensive camera gear won't always do it either unless your friend happens to be a professional and has experience shooting bands. Your photographer must have the skills to know how to use the available light and to capture those timeless images. That's not as easy as you think, particularly on stage.

Quality matters if you want your band to present a professional image.

Hire A Photographer

It seems obvious, but it needs to be said. If you want professional images - get a professional! So many bands settle for classic 'Myspace poses' taken by their friends (and far too often themselves), which simply are not good enough.

Choosing a good photographer in this digital age starts by finding one with an extensive online portfolio so that you can gauge whether or not their style is what you're looking for. You can go further by finding someone who is also able to assist you with your online marketing, by putting together a dedicated web page, or making your existing one more professional. Your Myspace page is not enough - read this article for more info: evolvor.com/2007/08/07/is-myspace-all-that-a-guide-to-marketing-your-music-on-myspace/

Of course a full professional photographer may seem out of your very limited budget, but you'd be surprised at what packages start out at. Melbourne-based Rock Portrait Photography (rockportrait.com.au) offers packages starting at \$250, and is operated by a musician with plenty of on-stage experience. Split between five band members that's only \$50 each, or perhaps the return from a small local gig, and for that modest investment you can begin to market yourself at the level you need to gain attention. If you're looking to become the next U2 you'll need to spend more, but with the right creative photographer on board you're no longer limited by poor visuals on your web site and in your press kit.

Following are some tips for bands wanting to hire a professional photographer.

What To Look For In A Photographer

You don't want to end up in the middle of a shoot with someone who has vastly different creative ideas than you do! A lot of photographers consider themselves to be artists of sorts and may well want to place you in all sorts of artistic scenarios that don't quite suit your taste. Here are some things to look for when considering a photographer.

■ They have a website - this is always a good sign as it means they take themselves and their work seriously



Contact the Contemporary Music Touring Program for information on funding for Australian musicians to tour their original music around Australia. Funding applications close in February and July each year.

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■ You've seen their photographs on other artist sites - not likely for an unknown but if you're paying money then this is a definite plus

■ You've had a word of mouth recommendation - it's always a good idea to talk to someone who's worked with the photographer before, and if you've had an unprompted recommendation then that's always a bonus

■ They're friendly and open about prices - beware the ones who don't meet this bit of criteria or you could potentially be heading for a big bill

■ They use professional gear - someone who invests in good equipment is likely to pay more attention to what they're doing, the most common professional brands are Canon and Nikon Digital SLRs.

■ An added bonus is that they may have been in or still play in a band themselves. A photographer that understands the mechanics of a band and the art of stage-craft is better placed to capture your band the way you visual it.

■ Will you have full ownership of the photographs?

■ Is he expecting you to credit him every time the pictures are used?

■ What creative ideas does he have about what sort of shoot would work for you?

If they can't or won't answer any of those questions then consider carefully whether or not he's the right person for you to be working with. A good photographer will always be friendly, polite, and happy to sit down and work through the exact agreement with you. Of course don't forget that budget packages are not generally going to include transfer of copyright ownership or model release forms, however you won't actually need these in most cases

If you have any questions about music photography in general, Steve from Rock Portrait Photography is very open and happy to take your calls and emails with absolutely no obligation whatsoever. Stephen can be contacted on 0412 780 072

By Steven McGrath

Questions To Ask Them Before You Get Started

Photography and image copyright laws can be pretty complex at times so it's good to have a basic knowledge before you start working with someone. You don't want to end up paying for a shoot and only being allowed to take away 5 pictures which you then don't have full rights to! Here are some things to ask your potential photographer:

■ How do they charge? Per hour, or for a certain number of shots?

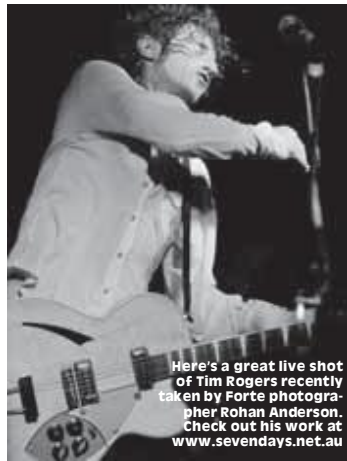
■ What contracts do they use, and do they have model release forms?

■ How many shots will you be able to take copies of?

■ What format will they be in? (jpg/raw/tiff/CD/prints/proofs/edits)

■ How many images will you get from the shoot?

■ What rights is the photographer giving you? Is he retaining any himself?



Here's a great live shot of Tim Rogers recently taken by Forte photographer Rohan Anderson. Check out his work at www.sevendays.net.au



A&D Printing & Design

Established in 2004, A and D Printing and Design has gone from strength to strength and has become one of Australia's most sought after independent band t-shirt printers. Dan McDougall, owner and creator of A and D Printing, has been part of the independent music industry for 15 years, and has played in many bands in that time and at present is the lead vocalist in one of Australia's longest standing metal bands Frankenkob. Dan saw that there was a serious lack of screen printers who only catered for independent musicians wants and needs; like very short turn arounds, small runs and a first class product at a very affordable price. As is it becoming harder and harder for bands to make money from CD sales, T-shirts and other merch are becoming more important every day in helping bands make money and make that extra cash needed when on tour in Australia. A and D Printing was specifically set up to keep their prices as low as possible in order for bands to make a better profit from each tee they sell. A and D Printing and Design is based in Melbourne, but they deliver to any part of Australia. For more info and prices please visit www.myspace.com/adprinting - or contact Dan on 0439 366 225 or email him at ad_shirts@hotmail.com



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