

Students' independent song release

As a teacher at Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, a trend I had noticed is the increase in music ākonga submitting release - quality songs for assessment purposes. It seemed apparent to me that, in the modern music environment, there was no reason why they couldn't go to the next step and release their work in a professional environment.

Given Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu's emphasis on 'leaving to learn,' and students gaining job-related skills, this seemed like an opportunity waiting to happen. This is far from the first time that a Kura has recorded and released students' work; this approach is innovative because it actually puts them in the marketplace in a structured and safe way, with the support of a clear outline containing the skills and processes necessary to publish their work.

The intent was to take what initially seems like quite a daunting and, frankly, intimidating process and break it down into a sequential, manageable process that also enabled ākonga to retain control over the copyright of their master recordings and intellectual property.

We have applied this approach with a small group of ākonga who meet two relatively simple criteria:

1. Can produce a quality recording of a finished work

Sometimes we need to offer help on this, but not often. There is no editorial involvement, and I have observed that solid writing tends to go hand in hand with quality recording. There is no bias towards any particular genre, and no consideration whatsoever about whether a song might 'sell.'

2. Are willing to go through the process

This is necessary because the process of releasing music is not easy, nor is it quick. Normally things would take 6-8 weeks from the beginning to an actual release date, and then 3 months of promotion after that. None of the ākonga involved showed any hesitation about this aspect.

Here is what we do:

- Pay for individual tracks to be mastered, including the cost of digital distribution (a minimal outlay)
- Offer advice on the basics of contemporary promotional techniques and practice.
- Guide ākonga through:
 - a basic understanding of copyright, performance royalties and mechanical royalties;

- submitting their works with APRA and Recorded Music NZ, each of whom have been extremely helpful and supportive; using a digital distributor (of their choice) to get their songs onto most of the streaming services; and
- how to use Spotify for artists to understand their streaming data.

Criticism of this particular platform is fairly widespread, but the key thing that Spotify offers artists above all else is accurate analytical data. This means an artist can get a really clear picture of how a song is doing in terms of plays, countries, listening demographic and so on.

I want to identify two crucial outcomes. Firstly, the student retains ownership and control over their work, allowing them to benefit from an income from their work. While this may seem like not much of a big deal, it is in fact crucial; most income in the music industry comes from ownership of master recordings and intellectual property. Historically, there has been a considerable amount of frankly predatory behaviour in this area. It is really important for an artist to understand, given that a song has a 'lifetime of a lifetime' and can continue to earn income for its creators in perpetuity.

Secondly, because this process can be repeated at will, each artist becomes the 'owner/operator' of a small business with an exploitable asset (each song) and experience of the process of releasing and controlling incomes. Essentially, ākonga become a small record label on their own. The message is one of empowerment, that of a creative artist being able to make steps into a world from which they traditionally have been largely excluded or distracted by meaningless promises of fame.

We have been running this initiative for a number of years now, and it has been a gratifying process guiding these young folks through their first steps into a new music industry. This industry is stronger because they are empowered to create their own vision, aware of how to retain incomes, and confident enough to take the necessary chances that make creative work ultimately so fulfilling as a career.

BIO: Trevor Faville is the secondary music teacher for the Central North region at Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (the Correspondence school). Previously he worked as a Head of Department at Melville High School, Fairfield College and also as a lecturer in the graduate programme at the University of Waikato School of Education. In addition, he has actively contributed to the NZ music industry since 2003. Working in multiple bands including DateMonthYear and running the bespoke music consultation service, DMY Foundation, Faville's self-funded, produced, and marketed approach have seen his releases successfully licensed to TV, movies, and ads worldwide. Experienced in writing, recording, performing, and collaborating, Faville is passionate about engaging with musicians to create opportunities through sharing industry knowledge and experience.



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