

SHAWN THOMAS STUDIOS (STS)

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RECORDING & PRODUCTION

GUESS WHO'S NOT GOING TO BUY YOUR MUSIC

(by Shawn Thomas – www.shawnthomasonline.com)

If you're planning on budgeting your sales income based on who you know – don't bank on it. Even more important – don't borrow on it! It's a mistake I've made more than once. Actually, it's a mistake I've made more than a bunch! I'm not the only indie artist to make this expensive mistake because to the beginning artist it makes sense and even sounds smart. Here's the scenario:

You're about to plan your budget based on sales you *think* you'll make as soon as your first project is released. You might even be planning on using some of that "immediate" income to pay for (or pay off) the recording you've already done or the order for CD duplication you're about to place. You're thinking, "Well, let's see, I'm still pretty close with everyone from my college fraternity/sorority, so there's at least 50 sales... and I'm sure everyone at the office will want one, so there's another 25 copies... and of course my church friends will support me, so I bet I can sell another 50 or so there... and then I know a bunch of people at the gym, so maybe another 10 or 20 there... and plus once my family tells their friends, that'll be at least another 25 to 50... so I'm thinking within a few weeks of the release I should be able to sell around 150 to 200 copies easy. At \$15 a CD, that'll be two to three thousand dollars which will just about cover my production costs. Add in to that all the friends I have on Facebook and Twitter, and who knows how much I can make!"

WRONG! Not going to happen.

The last people who are going to buy your music are the people you know. Why? Because they know you! Sure they love you – but you're just "Bill" or "Susie" from work or school, or you're Elaine and Frank's kid. But wait, there's more! To top it off, not only are they probably not going to buy your music, chances are they're *expecting* you to GIVE them a copy. Why? Because they know you! Sure, when you put up that YouTube clip on your Facebook page of your band jamming out at The Blue Velvet Café, everyone posted comments about how great you sound and they can't wait until your CD comes out – but that doesn't mean they're actually going to buy it.

Obviously, there are exceptions. Thankfully, there are those few who “get it” and who understand what you’re doing and will want to support your music with both their words and their wallets. But chances are you’ll only have a handful of these precious pals.

So, who is going to buy your music? The people who don’t already know you. The problem is it’s hard to get their attention. Websites like ReverbNation.com and CDBaby.com are great resources, but your best chance at receiving some impulse buying is at your performances. If you’re hoping to raise some money in sales, you’ve got to be out there playing live and letting people hear your incredible stuff. Once a buzz is started, then you might start seeing some new Facebook friends that “like” you because of your music and not because they were in your junior high math class. A few of those new “friends” might actually buy stuff from you online. Why? Because they don’t know you!

The moral of this story is this: Don’t plan on making any money from people you know. If you happen to have some friends who are surprise exceptions to the rule, great; but, in general your source of financial support is going to come from those you don’t know personally. Plan way ahead of yourself in budgeting your spending for recording and duplication. Have fundraisers, house concerts, pre-release parties. You might even receive some contributions from some of your friends and family in these settings, and then, who knows, they might even “get it” when your slammin’ new CD comes out and actually pay for it! (Just don’t plan on it.)

The good news is, the longer you’re “in the business” the more you start to meet people who get introduced to you as a performer. At this point, the rule changes and all of a sudden you have friends who know you as this awesome musical artist. Guess who’s going to be at the front of the line to buy your new release now?

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