

How to get the best out of your gigs

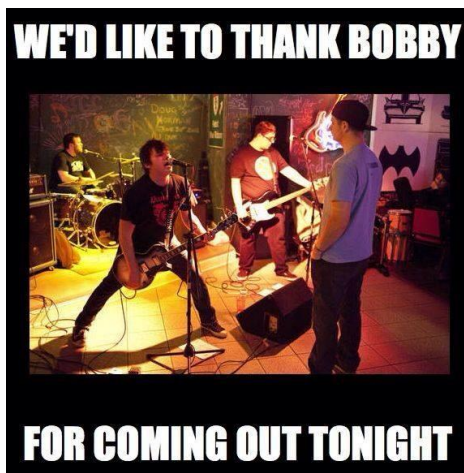
Introduction

So, you're in an emerging band, trying to **'cut your teeth'** on the circuit and make a name for yourself, just like the millions of bands that have tried (and mostly failed) before you. What you should be thinking is: how are you going to **make the best out of your gigs**? What is going to give you the **best results** for your **hard work and determination**? How are you going to give your band **the best opportunity to succeed**?

I have been working with bands for over 10 years now as a musician, promoter, and manager. Some of the bands I have worked with include [Night by Night](#) (signed to [Sun Hill Productions](#) alongside the world renowned [Europe](#)), [Subsource](#) (now known as [Black Futures](#) who have toured with the likes of [The Prodigy](#)), [Neonfly](#) (recently toured with [Dragonforce](#)), and [No Sin Evades His Gaze](#) (signed to [Monolithic Music](#) and recently had a shout out from [Alex Baker](#), of [Kerrang Radio](#) for being "heavy as titanic"), just to name but a few. In my time working with bands I have picked up a lot of knowledge in how to get the best from live shows as an emerging artist and it is what I'm going to share with you today. What I will be covering is less to do with the performance aspect of a live show, but more to do with the promotion and capitalising on the rewards that a good performance can bring.

Promoting Your Shows

Promotion is undoubtedly a major contributor to the success of an event but it is also one of the key areas often neglected. A lot of the time it is down to poor planning or laziness that gives ineffective results. One thing I have heard before however is this statement:



"It is up to the promoter to promote, and the performers to perform" –Local whiny band

Whilst I agree with the basic principle of the statement, it is not something you should live or die by. Whilst it is the job of the promoter to promote the show they have booked you on, it is YOU who has direct access to your following. That access is part of the value of you as a product / service in which the promoter is paying for (unless you are playing for free / pay to play / ticket split). It is in yours and the promoter's best interest to capitalise on every readily available option promotion possible. The bigger the crowd,

the better impression you give and the more fun everyone has!

You are small fry (for now)!

The other thing you have to realise is you are small fry and you are working with small fry promoters, some of which aren't as hard working / good as others. You need to make sure your events are

promoted well, even if it means doing a job that the promoter should be doing. No band got anywhere by moaning at promoters for not working hard enough and doing nothing in protest. The only way you can work with better promoters is if you establish your band more and increase your value.

Social Media

There are a few obvious ways to promote a gig that are either free, or low cost. The first and by far easiest is through your social media platforms. Create an event, invite your friends, and draw attention to it. Simple!

Online Listings & Ticket Agents

Have the event listed online with websites such as [SongKick](#) and [BandsInTown](#), and if there is a local ticketing agent such as [SEE Tickets](#) in London, use them. This is something that is usually done by the promoter or venue, if not, do it yourself! Some sites will need an allocation of tickets to sell in order for it to be listed so work with the promoter / venue to get that sorted. The bonus of doing this is that the agents will send out emails to their mailing lists promoting the event and your band.

The Waste Management's Favourite: Flyers!

*A more hands on approach: It is extremely easy now to get [custom A5 flyers](#) and [A3 posters](#) printed at a very low cost. The key for this to be effective and not a waste of money however is by **researching where your target market will likely be**. If you are a death metal band, it is highly unlikely that your target market will go into a quiet little café full of punters all wearing knitted jumpers (hipsters!) however, they might go to the local pub that plays rock and metal all day. Go into the establishment and ask if it's cool to leave some flyers and a poster, most places will say yes (unless they are part of a chain).*



Be a “Social Whore”

Socialise! The bands with the biggest crowds most usually are social whores and have lots of friends. The power of networking and talking to people beats printed marketing flat down. Become a social whore and you will soon start seeing the results. Another good place to promote your band is at the gigs of much bigger bands of a similar genre. I know one hard rock band that is always stood outside in the freezing cold, dressed up, talking to people in the queue to see Skid Row or some other big name. It really works, especially if you are good at socialising.

The last tip I will leave is to promote the other bands on the bill, mentioning other bands increases the value of the event you are trying to sell - Unless you are playing with Justin Bieber of course!

There are a myriad of other ways in which you can promote an event so get thinking creatively and explore new options. It's often that the most innovative ideas work the best so give them a whirl! It could be fun.

Have a Merchandise Table

Merchandise isn't solely there as a money maker for your band. In fact as an emerging artist it is doubtful that you will make much profit from merch. Instead, think of it as another form of marketing for your band to maximise the impression you are leaving on the audience's mind, just like how a brand would market their products at events. Looking professional can work wonders on how people perceive the status of your band. If you look like a band about to hit the limelight, people will more likely to jump on the bandwagon.

Fluffy Toys Do Not Make Good Merch...

*The key to a good piece of merch is the design. It needs to be something that people can not only identify with your band, but is also professional and something that they would want. The most obvious product to have on your merch table would be [Printed T-Shirts](#). They are easily produced and generally quite cheap; just find a company that manufactures **personalised T-Shirts**. Another product I've seen work well (strangely) is [Screen Printed Mugs](#), most likely because everybody drinks tea / coffee at work! If someone brings a mug into work with your band logo on it, it is likely co-workers will ask who that band is. There are tons of products out there which you can include on your table, just have a little explore.*

Maximising Potential

A way to maximise the success of a merch table is to have the band run the desk instead of the drummer's uncool mother. This is particularly useful for after your performance since anyone looking to appraise the band will have to go to the merch table to do so. It is also a good idea to have [business cards](#) to give away that contain the band's logo, website address, and contact details. Whilst your singer may have read out your extremely long URL mid set to the drunken, slightly deafened audience, it is highly doubtful any of them will remember, nor be able to read their own smudged handwriting the next morning where they've written it on their sweaty hand. A drunk person will certainly pocket a card though and read it the next day when they try to remember where they were last night!



Finally, another tactic you can use in conjunction with your merch table is to have a pen, paper, and clipboard for which people can

write their name and email address on. This allows you to setup a mailing list which you can use to promote your next event in that area. Mailing lists can be hard to get people on board but they are a powerful tool so it is worthwhile thinking of incentives such as a giveaway or competition. For example “Win a pair of [Engraved Personalised Drumsticks](#)”.

Special Events

There comes a time when sometimes, a simple gig just isn't enough. An event where you really want to make a lasting impact and make it a night people will remember. I'm talking of an album launch party or an industry showcase (not to be mistaken with a pay to play promoter promising you a record label rep will be present). The best way to do this is by thinking out of the box with ideas in which you can get the audience interacting positively and create an electrifying atmosphere.

Ideas, Ideas, Ideas!

Something that has worked particularly well with bands I have worked with is using promotional ticket bundles for fans to purchase a ticket alongside your upcoming album or a piece of merchandise (such as a **printed t-shirt** which they can also wear at the gig). Not only does this provide bigger incentive to purchase a ticket, it also means you will likely find members of the audience wearing your merch which looks great for PR. This can be setup through your own store online through such websites like [Bandcamp](#) and [BigCartel](#).

Adding Your Own Personal Touch

The way to really make an impact though is by doing something different. For example, you could hand out goodie bags, people love free stuff! You can also include [Personalised Masks](#) of each of the band members for the audience to all wear during the gig as a novelty. Small things like this can go a long way into making sure the audience has a fun time that they will certainly remember and will definitely help impress any journalists, agents, and other industry professionals you have invited too!

The Party Doesn't Stop Here!

Don't let it stop there though, the gig may have ended but the afterparty is nigh! Make sure to set up a place to go after the live music curfew for you to interact further with the audience, reaffirming the positive impression you are trying to give. Having an afterparty also opens up possibilities for extra promotion such as contacting a promoter of a nearby club night and asking if they are up for a joint venture. In return for promoting your event with **flyers** and **posters** in their club, you can promote their night as the afterparty destination, pushing your fans through their doors. It works extremely well if you can secure a discount entry too. Remember to take photos and get people to tag themselves!

Conclusion

There you have it, a bucket of knowledge condensed into a tiny article for your benefit. There is so much more that you can do though and all it takes is an innovative mind and some strategizing. If you truly love what you do and want to take it further, go that extra mile. You might never play Wembley stadium, but at least you can say you tried!