

Who's Managing Your Manager?

by Gian Fiero

If you are a music artist that has a need for someone to: filter communications between you and third parties that have expressed a professional interest in your services as an artist, or the use of your music; negotiate contracts and offers of employment; schedule and coordinate your professional activities; direct and interface with the various members of your support team; and provide counsel pertaining to the most advantageous or strategic career moves to make, then you need a competent professional manager.

Needless to say (but I will say it anyway for the sake of clarification) that if you don't have such business affairs pending, then you don't need a manager. Many music artists cling to the false perception that their manager will help them get gigs or a record deal. While those notions are not entirely true, they are not entirely untrue either. Some managers will (illegally and unknowingly) book gigs for their acts in an effort to become immediately and actively involved.

Some ambitious managers may even take on music artists before they have any real business affairs to manage, and pursue a record deal for them with the intent of generating activities and income that warrant their involvement. This is not the norm, so consider yourself very lucky if it does happen to you. Managers get paid a commission on the income that you make, so if you are making nothing, then what do you think they will be paid? This is what managers refer to as a "non-commissionable" client, which makes you

susceptible and vulnerable to the inexperienced managers.

While every professional started out with no experience at one time or another, you must be aware of the exploitive and predatory nature of the music industry. Personal managers who do not fully understand the dynamics of the music business can not efficiently help navigate you through the illogical maze of industry operations that make success so elusive.

If you happen to find an inexperienced manager (or if one finds you) that you trust and feel will be dedicated to helping you achieve success, then work with them; but accept and understand the following: a) there is truly no substitute for experience, b) their experience may come at your expense and c) if they ever feel overwhelmed or unsure, they can - and should - consult with an entertainment attorney.



Before you get a record deal or have a myriad of activities to handle, your inexperienced manager will be very eager to execute whatever business related tasks you have for them. But if you do get a record deal and are suddenly thrust into the cryptic and methodical music business game where the players are savvy, seasoned veterans who know the finer points and strategies of deal making, you will find that your attorney will provide much needed guidance to your inexperienced manager, and a reason to relax a little more for you.

With a lack of experience, your personal manager will rely heavily on his/her communication, follow-through, and people skills. They should also do whatever they can to learn more about the music industry. If by chance you find that you are telling them what to say to people, or what to do and how to do it, then you have a problem that begets the question: Who's managing who?

If you harbor any doubts or suspicions about your manager's competence (or in this case motivation and potential), you should end the relationship as quickly as possible. In the end, you would much rather be an artist whose inexperienced manager is gaining confidence and experience as a result of being managed by an attorney, than an artist who is managing their manager.