



November

Getting your act together

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I've been in a band for as long as I can remember (some real, some imaginary). We did our first gig as the Frank and Walters in October 1989, I'm officially ancient and therefore have the right to rant and rave and implore ye young whippersnappers to get things organised!!!

Having started a record label 3 years ago I can safely say I've seen both sides of the business. Now this might come as a shock to some people, but it's not all about the music. The band that has their act together are far more likely to get ahead than a band who are all over the shop. One of the first acts that I signed were a Polish band called Myslovitz. I couldn't believe how professional they were, it was so easy to work with them and it was all basic stuff. The day we shook on the deal they handed over a mountain of information - press books, biogs, photos and contact lists. They were always contactable, always available, websites were constantly updated and when you asked for something you got it. The whole operation ran so smoothly that you felt they couldn't fail.

TASKS/RESPONSIBILITY

These need to be identified, agreed and acted upon. If Timmy is in charge of updating the Myspace site once a week and he doesn't do it he should get a bollocking. If it happens again throw him out of the band - he's only a lamer anyway and he was a crap bass player!

MEDIA

So important I'll say it again, so important. You cannot afford not to be on top of things when it comes to these guys. People want to write about new Irish music, and shows exist on radio stations all over the country that want to spotlight new music - you just have to deliver it in an organised manner. The amount of CDs I've gotten over the years without a track listing is unreal; it's simple stuff.

PUBLICITY IDEAS

In this day and age there is no reason why the world shouldn't know your band. You can be your own label/radio station/TV channel/publicist/distributor, it just takes a bit of work and some lateral thinking. The world isn't going to come knocking on your door. Humiliation seems to work - maybe upload a video to YouTube of Timmy doing something embarrassing.

LISTS

Keep a record of everything. I know that on the 10th of February 1992 I was in the Sheffield Octagon. I know who the promoter was, how many t-shirts we sold, how many posters were put up, how long we played for, and what songs went down well. This is vital information. Use it to improve things and grow the band. (12 long sleeved and 5 short sleeved - it was pretty cold - although I neglected to note the exact air temperature, shame on me!)

THE MUSIC

Practise really does make perfect, and practise doesn't mean downing a rake of cans and trying to get your girlfriend/boyfriend back to the jamming room after the club for a bit of how's your father! Rehearsals need to be taken seriously, and everything needs to be recorded even if it's on a humble ol' cassette recorder (you can still get tapes in pound shops). Every musician I know has forgotten at least five classic potential number ones.

THE SHOW

Avoid eight minute guitar solos. They've gone out of fashion for a reason! Keep sets short and punchy. Avoid long gaps between songs - it's easy to lose the crowd. Speaking of the audience, try to interact with them. So many bands these days seem to ignore this one. They came out to see you and they want to like you. Throw them a bone! If you're painfully shy you can think up a few things beforehand. I hear something along the lines of "you're a lovely audience," or "here's the keys to me flat, I'll be back to ya in twenty minutes" works a treat these days.

THE GEAR

Have many tuners - ones that work - with batteries that work. Have power cables that work, spare strings, sticks and skins (the drum kind). Arrange to share backline with the other bands to cut down on changeover time and to make things easy on the nice sound guy/gal. Be very pleasant to sound guy/gal, in fact be very pleasant to everyone, except Timmy. He's the fella that has caused all these problems in the first place!