Independent music marketing in the digital age: an examination of the decision making process and key issues facing an independent singer-songwriter producing and marketing an album (LP) in the digital age

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Independent Music Marketing In The Digital age

An examination of the decision making process and key issues facing an independent singer-songwriter producing and marketing an album (LP) in the digital age.

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This exegesis is presented for candidature for the degree of Masters of Arts, School of Arts and Social Science, Southern Cross University, Lismore, 2015.

April 20th, 2015
Declaration

I, Shane Murphy, declare that the work presented in this exegesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Signed ..................................................Date .................................................
Abstract

It has been widely documented that the global music recording industries have been undergoing major structural transformations since the arrival of music piracy and digital downloading that began on a mass scale over the Internet at the start of the 21st century. Anderton, Dubber and James (2013) state: “the move to digital and online music is not merely a change in format but a complete change in the media environment and a radical restructuring of the whole industry” (p. 1). These changes have also happened in a relatively short timeframe compared to previous transitions. Today’s digital music revolution is moving to the next phase as consumers embrace streaming and subscription models in markets around the world. Along with these changing product formats, is an increased access to a larger global music catalogue at lower prices, the fragmentation of music broadcasting and media (from the dominance of radio and television to online and mobile alternatives) and the proliferation of new digital communication channels for music promotion. This exegesis situates an Australian independent singer songwriter in the context of this rapid transformation and considers key issues facing independent musicians from a practice-based perspective. Using autoethnographic analysis, this exegesis examines the decision-making processes and workflows required when releasing an album in the digital age, and explores the nexus between specific artistic and marketing processes.
Acknowledgments

This Masters project has been imbued with the force that drives the heart and soul of creative expression. So thank you to the great spirit of creativity and also an acknowledgement to the indigenous people across the world, the original independent musicians.

I would like to thank Southern Cross University and in particular the Research Training Unit and all the staff there who have supported my project. I would like to thank sincerely Grayson Cooke who when presented with the original concept championed this project to the higher degrees research committee at Southern Cross University.

My respect goes out to my principle supervisor Philip Hayward whose impressive academic vision and integrity kept me from navel gazing. Respect and gratitude also to my co-supervisor Dr. Barry Hill who offered excellent counter point perspectives and really allowed me to realize the interdisciplinary nature of my project.

I would like to thank my partner Jennifer and children also, Orion, Inca, Jaiya and Arianna who have endured my stress during the last two years but who have provided their love and support and welcome distractions.

Finally this thesis is devoted to all those aspiring artisans of the world, in particularly the musicians, songwriters and the poets, who have committed to realizing creative vision and feel compelled to share it. It is the aim of this research to inspire and motivate those wanting to share and market this creativity beyond the bedroom and inspire others. With love, respect and gratitude we begin.
Preface

This research project has been inspired by a twenty-year career in both the participation of songwriting and performance but also in the education of the role of marketing in this process. The majority of my experience has been in the independent music sector in the Australian music industries. My work with a non-profit organization called Musicoz from 2003-2007 exposed me to the plights of thousands of music aspirants all vying for a share of the lucrative music market. In 2004 I was in charge of sorting through over 800 entries in the singer songwriter category of the Musicoz awards and did this again for the pop and alternative categories. During this time, and more recently as a marketing and business lecturer at a variety of institutions including: Southern Cross University, SAE Qantum Creative Media Institute, Northern Rivers Conservatorium of music, the Conservatorium of Music (Griffith University) in Brisbane, I have anecdotally interviewed and had in-depth discussions with musicians and songwriters about music marketing and business. I have attempted to guide them in their efforts to plot a viable career path in the music industries and highlighted the many alternatives available. As a member of this musical community myself I find myself constantly needing to switch perspectives from that of a music industries professional, a manager, a marketer, a record label executive, a web developer to that of an artist, a creator and a visionary. Burnard (2012), Williamson and Cloonan (2007) and Wikstrom (2014) highlight a multi-disciplinarian view of the ‘music industries’ acknowledging the need for independent musicians to view the industry more broadly than just their creative practice. Indeed embracing all the different facets from creation to production, from management to marketing, is the requirement to develop a music career in the digital age. Given my experience and background I was inspired to focus on my own creative practice as a source of research and to use a practical approach to offer insight into the issues facing my own musical community.
# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1 - Introduction** ................................................................................................................. 9

1.1 Research Aims ............................................................................................................................... 11

1.2 Research Scope and Audience ................................................................................................………. 14

1.3 Discussion of Key Terms ................................................................................................................ 16

1.3.1 Creative and music industries .................................................................................................... 16

1.3.2 Independent Music ...................................................................................................................... 17

1.3.3 Independent Musicians ............................................................................................................... 18

1.3.4 Music Marketing ......................................................................................................................... 19

1.3.5 Singer-songwriter ....................................................................................................................... 20

1.3.6 Music Production ....................................................................................................................... 21

1.3.7 Album ........................................................................................................................................ 22

1.3.8 The "Digital Age" of the Music industries ................................................................................. 23

1.4 Concluding Remarks ..................................................................................................................... 25

**Chapter 2 - Methodology** ................................................................................................................ 27

2.1 Identifying a research gap ............................................................................................................... 27

2.2 Researcher Background – The participant observer ..................................................................... 28

2.3 An Interdisciplinary /International Approach to Understanding Creative Practice .................. 30

2.4 The Case For Practice-based Research ....................................................................................... 32

2.5 The Case For Analytical Autoethnography and the use of Grounded Theory Techniques ........ 33

**Chapter 3 - Releasing Music in the Digital Age: An industry perspective** .... 38

3.1 The economic significance of independent music ........................................................................ 38

3.2 General music industries trends .................................................................................................. 40

3.2.1 Trend 1: Transition of physical to digital music products ......................................................... 41

3.2.2 Trend 2: Impact of music piracy on sales .................................................................................. 41

3.2.3 Trend 3: The falling ‘perceived’ value of music and freemium strategies ............................... 42

3.2.4 Trend 4: Lower barriers to entry into the music industries ..................................................... 43

3.2.5 Trend 5: Increasing importance of data in informing music marketing decisions ...................... 45

3.2.6 Trend 6: The rise of crowd funding as an alternative financing option for artists and crowd-generated marketing .......................................................................................... 46

3.2.7 Trend 7: The growing importance of social media as a communication platform for artists .................................................................................................................. 47

3.3 Traditional verses new marketing approaches in the music industries ..................................... 48

3.4 Summary of specific issues facing independent artists marketing their own creative works ........ 50

3.4.1 Issue 1: Motivation to market music on a limited time, budget and skill set ............................ 51

3.4.2 Issue 2: Becoming ‘market ready’ without development support ............................................ 54

3.4.3 Issue 3: Traditional marketing gives way to new digital marketing approaches requiring new skills .................................................................................................................. 56
Chapter 4 - Acknowledging influences on independent music production and marketing

4.1 Musical and Song-writing influences ........................................ 60
4.2 Music Production influences .................................................. 66
4.3 Technology influences .......................................................... 67
4.4 Social influences .................................................................. 71
4.5 Cultural influences ............................................................... 72
4.6 Economic influences ............................................................. 73
4.7 Political influences ............................................................... 74
4.8 Legal influences ................................................................... 74
4.9 Commercial influences .......................................................... 75
4.10 Personal influence ............................................................... 81

Chapter 5 - Marketing Planning for an independent album release: An overview

5.1 An Overview of the Independent Marketing Planning Process .......... 82
  5.1.1 Situational Analysis ............................................................ 83
  5.1.2 Marketing Objectives ......................................................... 86
  5.1.3 Market Segmentation and Target Marketing (s) ..................... 88
  5.1.4 Branding and positioning .................................................. 92
  5.1.5 Marketing mix .................................................................. 94
  5.1.6 Monitoring and Evaluation ............................................... 100
  5.1.7 Implementation Plan ....................................................... 101
  5.1.8 Budgeting ...................................................................... 101
  
5.2 The Independent Music Marketing Team ..................................... 105
  5.2.1 Product Development Partners ........................................ 102
  5.2.2 Promotional Development Partners ................................... 103
  5.2.3 Other Commercial Partners ............................................. 103

Chapter 6 - Producing an album in the digital age: Outcome one

6.1 Pre-production Process .......................................................... 109
  6.1.1 Idea Generation ............................................................... 110
  
6.2 Production Process ............................................................... 116
  6.2.1 Recording process ........................................................... 116
  6.2.2 Mixing ........................................................................... 119
  6.2.3 Mastering ....................................................................... 121

Chapter 7 - Packaging, branding and promoting an album in the digital age: Outcome two

7.1 Background to the brand concept ........................................... 123
  7.2 HCF Artwork and Packaging .................................................. 125
    7.2.1 Choosing a designer ...................................................... 125
    7.2.2 The artwork imagery ...................................................... 126
    7.2.3 The issue of cultural appropriation ................................. 128
7.2.4 Font choice.......................................................................................................................... 129
7.2.5 Image choice for inside the CD......................................................................................... 129
7.2.6 Artist name........................................................................................................................ 130
7.2.7 Album Title....................................................................................................................... 130
7.2.8 Album photography.......................................................................................................... 130
7.2.9 Physical package, information requirements and manufacturing............................... 131
7.2.10 Digital Packaging Requirements..................................................................................... 132

7.3 Branded promotional material development and promotional planning...133
7.3.1 Online Promotion............................................................................................................. 135
7.3.2 Direct marketing and personal selling............................................................................. 146
7.3.3 Publicity............................................................................................................................ 147
7.3.4 Radio airplay campaign................................................................................................... 150
7.3.5 Live Performance............................................................................................................. 152
7.3.6 Music Video....................................................................................................................... 153
7.3.7 Traditional Advertising................................................................................................... 154
7.3.8 Sales promotions............................................................................................................... 155
7.3.9 Merchandising.................................................................................................................. 156
7.3.10 Partnerships /sponsorship.............................................................................................. 157
7.3.11 Music competitions........................................................................................................ 158
7.3.12 Music Tradeshows.......................................................................................................... 158

Chapter 8 - Conclusions........................................................................................................... 159
8.1 Reflection 1: A self-managed, self-promoted ISS releasing an album in the digital age is engaged in three creative practices that are interrelated including contemporary music, independent music marketing and management practices. ........................................ 159
8.2 Reflection 2: Decisions based on personal feelings and judgements may not necessarily match the decisions required for career advancement and commercial goals. ................................................................. 161
8.3 Reflection 3: Playing to your musical, song writing and collaborator strengths to support the idea screening, selection and music product development process. ................................................................. 162
8.4 Reflection 4: The use of a home studio recording DAW for additional sound recording, tracking and mixing can offer significant costs savings without noticeable detriment to product quality. ................................................................................................................. 163
8.5 Reflection 5: Importance of a planned music marketing approach..................................... 164
8.6 Reflection 6: The case for a ‘single’ based approach for the ISS....................................... 165
8.7 Reflection 7: Social media represents a big marketing opportunity for an ISS but can have negative impacts on contemporary music practice. ................................................................................................................. 166
8.8 Reflection 8: Importance of maximising multiple revenue streams including merchandising, partnerships, licencing as well as live performance. ................................................................. 167
8.9 Reflection 9: The importance of being self-motivated, self-confident and having enough time and resources to implement a plan to market music. ........................................ 167
8.10 Concluding Remarks........................................................................................................... 169
List of Figures

Figure 1  Digital revenue breakdown by format, 2008-2013 ........................................ 24
Figure 2  Independent Musician Key Business Support Relationships ......................... 76
Figure 3  An Integrated Marketing communications approach for an ISS ...................... 93
Figure 4  ‘Levels of a product’ theoretical model .......................................................... 95
Figure 5  Physical album package example .................................................................... 96
Figure 6  Digital download Card example ..................................................................... 96
Figure 7  Digital download on iTunes Example ............................................................. 96
Figure 8  Digital Streaming Example ......................................................................... 97
Figure 9  The New Product Development Process ....................................................... 105
Figure 10 The Relationship Between Music Production and Marketing Processes for an ISS 107
Figure 11 Six thinking hat system by Edward De Bono ............................................... 112
Figure 12 Example of family branding using stimulus generalisation .......................... 124
Figure 13 Home page Artist Website banner .............................................................. 126
Figure 14 HCF album front and back cover ................................................................. 127
Figure 15 The Promotional Mix For an ISS Releasing an Album .................................. 134
Figure 16 Managing an online presence as an ISS ....................................................... 137
Figure 17 Example: Use of verbs to prompt action ...................................................... 138
Figure 18 Example of an audio player widget with built in action step ......................... 139
Figure 19 Example of a Twitter container labelled Latest News on the Home page of the artist website ......................................................................................................... 139
Figure 20 Example of widget updated on the mobile phone to update website & Facebook .................................................................................................................................... 140
Figure 21 Example Instagram container on website ..................................................... 140
Figure 22 Example of a Reverbnation Press Widget on Home Page ......................... 141
Figure 23 Examples of sales promotions focusing on ‘bundling ’ .............................. 156
Chapter 1 - Introduction

The adoption of digital audio file formats in the late twentieth century (Ku, 2002; Simpson, 2006) has prompted a major shift in the way music is promoted and distributed within the popular music industries. While there have been major shifts in format throughout the history of the music industries in the past, these have focused more on product format changes that did not alter the role of the songwriter or performing musician. Dubber (2012) states:

This is not like the change between Vinyl and CD. It’s more like the shift from printed sheet music to recordings and broadcasting. This is a complete transformation of the media environment, and of the ways in which people behave, adapt and operate in that media environment. (p. 33)

This transition is resulting in a shift from music ownership (digital files CDs, Vinyl etc.) to streaming (free and subscription based access to online music libraries). Commercial industry modeling has predicted that digital recorded music revenue may surpass physical recorded revenue for the first time in 2014 (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2014). Within this transition, the emergence of unauthorized digital file sharing (piracy) has lowered people’s perception of what music is worth (Mortimer, Nosko, & Sorensen, 2012). Marketing of a musical product within this digital revolution has resulted in a proliferation of digital music promotion channels alongside the print and broadcasting industries that have dominated the music industries in the past. (Amedeo, 2009; Anderton, Dubber, & James, 2013; Donnelly, 2014; Dubber, 2012; IFPI, 2014a; Marshall, 2013; O'Reilly, Larsen, & Kubacki, 2013; Wikstrom, 2014).

In the context of these fast moving industry changes, the independent musician is now situated at the center of both the creative and the marketing process. This exegesis relies on the autoethnographic method of enquiry and adopts a first person perspective that
focuses on a specific type of independent musician; that of an Australian independent singer-songwriter, and from hereon will be referred to by the acronym ISS. This exegesis provides an overview of my own personal practice as an independent singer songwriter and ‘do it your-self’ (DIY) music marketer. An ISS with the right skill set is able to access low cost technologies to produce professional high quality sound recordings and via an Internet connection they can access a vast global social media network that can be exploited at low cost to promote their musical product. (Brian J. Hracs, 2012; Zager, 2011). DJ Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2015) point out that the lowering of the barriers to entry that were evident in the traditional music industries has led to the emergence of many more smaller record labels and micro-independents catering to a wide range of music tastes and niche markets, co-existing side by side with the larger corporations and multinationals (p. 95). The opportunities created by these developments however requires that an ISS must also learn new business and marketing skills in an increasingly competitive market. It is important to note at the outset that the discipline of marketing incorporates all facets of product development, pricing, distribution as well as promotional strategies. One of the most common descriptions of marketing is focused only on advertising and selling, and nothing else. “Such descriptions are disappointing because marketing actually encompasses many more activities” (Pride, Ferrell, Lukas, Schembri, & Niininen, 2014, p. 5). Therefore this study will focus not only on the changes brought about by the Internet and digitalisation of the music industries in terms of online promotion but also in terms of product development, pricing and distribution activities and the role of market research in guiding the process.

This exegesis examines important conceptual linkages between the artistic processes and the necessary marketing processes involved in the production of a creative work and its preparation for release in the digital age of the music industries. This exegesis will examine and document the creative and commercial decision making processes used by myself, a self managed, ISS. Not only does this exegesis identify the types of decisions required but it also investigates the rationale and thought process behind those decisions
using an autoethnographic mode of inquiry. It will critically engage with the practice-based research approach that “situates creative practice as both a driver and outcome of the research process” (Hamilton & Jaaniste, 2009, p. 1). The outcome of this research is a creative portfolio (album and branded promotional materials) and this exegesis that incorporates an analysis of the process to develop this portfolio. The analysis incorporates the process of developing the creative portfolio artefacts and the initial marketing planning considerations during this process but does not cover the implementation and evaluation phase of the project. This would be an area worthy of future investigation and research.

1.1 Research Aims

The research fields of this project are situated within the The Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation (CCI) classification of ‘music and the performing arts’ and ‘marketing and advertising’, two different sectors within the the creative industries (Council & Roundtable, 2008). Accordingly my creative practice can be seen as straddling these two areas; focusing on songwriting and creative artefact production as a self-managed artist and also the development of marketing strategies that can ensure the creative works can potentially achieve commercial return on investment and some form of career advancement. This exegesis explores these two areas specifically however it also needs to be acknowledged that the management of processes, people and logistics are also necessary in the absence of an artist manager. An integration of management theory is beyond the scope of this exegesis but an analysis of ‘self-management practice’ and independent musicians is worthy for future research considerations. This exegesis does explore some self-management processes and issues but focuses more specifically on artistic and marketing processes and the nexus of these.

The rationale for this project is driven by a strong professional interest in the historical transformation of the music industries and a desire to understand the opportunities available to an ISS in terms of my own personal practice and that of a music business and
arts marketing lecturer. By reflecting on my own creative practice as an ISS in the Australian independent music community and engaging in the creative process of writing, producing and releasing my own album in the digital age, I am presenting an analysis of the impact of these industry changes. Heidegger (1996) recognized the importance of practical knowledge (praxis) to gain understanding, rather than just relying on theoretical knowledge (theoria). It is hoped that through my own practice and reflections that this research may provide practical insights for other independent artists and songwriters engaging in similar processes.

In terms of the conceptual framework, this exegesis will focus on the external and internal influences informing the creative work with a particular emphasis on how marketing influences interact with artistic decisions in the development of the creative work. This exegesis positions the creative work in the context of the digital music industries and the rapid technological and socio-cultural changes affecting it.

In summary this research aims to:

1. To examine the decision-making required by an ISS in the preparation, production and marketing planning of a music product in the digital age.

2. To apply marketing theory to the music industries, using a practice-based approach, providing insights into music marketing strategy through the lens of an artist and sensitive to the needs of the independent music community.

3. To explore new marketing approaches and technology that can allow the ISS to compete with much larger competitors with a significantly smaller budget and limited resources.
In reference to the second aim, O’Rielly (2013) states: “The traditional or classical marketing approach presents musicians as producers and operatives, yet their relationship with their music is deeply personal and intimate” (p. 223). In this sense the communication of marketing principles to the audience of independent musicians needs to consider their specific marketing environment and be sensitive to the needs and psychology of those artists operating within it. This exegesis adopts this approach.

This exegesis will present a multi-disciplinary discussion that examines the effectiveness of particular creative practices used by the author in composing, recording and the marketing planning for recorded music as an ISS. Anderton et al., (2013) suggest that multidisciplinary approaches may offer new insights into the music industries.

An approach which brings together a range of different academic disciplines has the potential to reveal more nuanced and integrated insights about the different sectors of, and issues within, the broad-based music industries (p. 21).

This approach is also reflected in the work of Burnard (2012) and Williamson and Cloonan (2007) discussed in the definition of the music industries in section 1.3, who recognized the need to approach studying the creative industries with more of a pluralistic perspective.

Within this project, the creative process of writing, producing and marketing planning has been documented using autoethnographic techniques (L. Anderson, 2006; C Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Pace, 2012). Supporting this is a literature review that contextualises the findings and situates the research within a field of similar studies.
The key outcomes of this research are this written exegesis and a creative portfolio consisting of:

- A ten-track album of original song compositions, packaged for international distribution.
- Music video(s) (Four part: ‘Making of’ video).
- An official artist website and also an online store for purchasing products.
- Social media websites consisting of a YouTube channel as well as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and a Tumblr blog connected to the artist website.
- A media kit including an artist biography, media release and promotional photos.
- Associated promotional materials including an album launch poster, and venue poster.

The end goal of this research is to produce a creative portfolio and an exegesis that reflects on specific approaches to the creation, marketing and commercialisation of recorded music in the digital age.

1.2 Research Scope and Audience

Being unsigned is the starting point for most musicians at the start of their career in the music industries. In fact the website Reverbnation publicly announced in January 2014 that there are nearly three million artists participating on its social media/promotional platform, the majority of whom are unsigned (Reverbnation, 2014). In Australia APRA, the local collection society that represents songwriters, states that they have over 87,000 members. Many of these are known to be independent musicians (APRA/AMCOS, 2015).

In terms of career prospects, the Australia Council of the Arts states that “relative to those involved with music, there are few paid employment opportunities and in general aspiring
musicians face small creative incomes and challenging career prospects” (Arts, 2015). Throsby and Zednik (2010) point to a lack of marketing skills and financial resources as a key skillset for Australian artists promoting their work (Throsby, Zednik, & Council, 2010, p. 58). For an ISS looking to establish a career and develop a team or record company around their work, they must first establish a strong product and identity (brand) as well as evidence of some sort of fan-base (Amedeo, 2009; Anderton et al., 2013; Baker, 2005; M. Beard, O'Hara, & Simpson, 2006; Dubber, 2012; White, 2007).

This research offers a practical insight into the process of marketing independent music in the digital age. It is hoped that this study enables artists to better understand how to engage with music production and marketing processes creatively and in a way conducive to career development.

In summary this research is most relevant to:

1. Independent musicians aiming for career development and to raise their profiles in the music marketplace.

2. Independent musicians striving to be recognized and signed by music companies but needing marketing to gain attention and interest from key industry players.

3. Independent musicians releasing and marketing sound recordings in the digital age wanting to understand more about the process.

The research may also have relevance for music industry professionals who do not engage in the creation of musical works such as:

1. Artist managers who want to understand more about the creative process of song-writing and product development in the digital age.
2. Music industry workers who may represent record labels or publishing businesses that have a financial interest in the product development of song ‘assets’ and the marketing of these and want to gain insights into the processes involved.

I now introduce and define key terms used in this study to provide a framework for discussion.

1.3 Discussion of Key Terms

1.3.1 Creative and music industries

As stated in the research aims, the music industries exist as an important sector of the wider creative industries. The Cultural Ministers Council report Building a Creative Innovation Economy, released in 2008, defines the creative industries as “the generation of creative intellectual property with the potential to be commercialised. It also identifies the creative industries’ as including:

- music and performing arts;
- film, television and radio;
- advertising and marketing;
- software development and interactive content;
- writing, publishing and print media; and
- architecture, design and visual arts” (p. 4).

Based on this segmentation it is noted that the creative practice of an independent musician exists within the field of the creative industries, incorporating music and performing arts, and as this exegesis will clearly outline, also the advertising and marketing sector. With the growing requirement of independent musicians to produce videos’ for multi-media sharing sites such as YouTube and requirements to generate written content for websites such as creative blog writing there is also an overlap into
writing and publishing. This requires a broader perspective in defining the music industry.

The music industry refers to those organisations and individuals that make money by creating, selling and distributing music (Anderton et al., 2013; Wikstrom, 2014). William and Cloonan (2007) propose that rather than treating the industry as a homogenous unit with shared objectives and interests that we see the industry more as a collection of varied interests from music production, distribution and marketing, legal management of intellectual property to photography and live event broadcasting, hence warranting the use of a plural description of the music industries (p. 1). This is also supported by Wikstrom (2014) who proposes that the music industry can be divided into three core music industries being the recording and distribution of music to consumers, the music licensing industry and the live performance industry (p. 10). Finally Burnard (2012) explains that musical creativity is limiting in its singular view of the practice. She instead suggests that the concept of musical creativity to be broadened to ‘musical creativities’ to reflect the plurality of different aspects in the social production of music especially in contemporary times (p. 3). Therefore from hereafter this exegesis will refer not to the music industry but the music industries.

### 1.3.2 Independent Music

There is no ‘definitive’ definition of independent music in the music industries. Both Simpson (2006) and Anderton et al., (2013), view independent music as that which is outside the realm of major label control. It is important to note that whilst many independent labels operate ‘independently’ of the major-label record companies, many of them “are distributed by the major labels and in some cases, the majors may also finance or part own the indie” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 210).

There are also definitions of independent music from a more cultural or music genre based standpoint that present independent music (or ‘indie music’) as an ethos that rejects
the mainstream and institutional authority, and, through various styles, gestures and/or rhetoric represents itself as embodying rebellion, individuality and authentic expression (Brian J Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Kruse, 2010; Suhr et al.). Hibbett (2005) describes indie rock as “not just as an aesthetic genre, but as a method of social differentiation” (p. 55). This rejection of mainstream corporate values is also evidenced by a growing movement of independent music artists that refuse to sign to a record label (Donnelly, 2014). These characteristics may or may not apply to all independent musicians across all music genres but are important to recognise in terms of the context of the study. McGuigan (2010) proposes that a neo-fordism approach recognises that the independent sector encourages a more flexible approach to production and marketing systems which may also explain the movement away from the more systematic approaches to production offered by major labels.

In summary, independent music may be contemplated both from an industry perspective and a music genre perspective. For the purposes of this exegesis I define independent music as music produced and marketed without major label backing resulting in music less constrained by formulaic approaches to music production, and can be more creative and experimental in nature carrying with it a sub-cultural ethos that distances itself from mainstream values.

1.3.3 Independent Musicians

In Australia, the community radio AIRIT Unsigned Initiative states that an unsigned band or artist is defined as:

- Not having a recording contract or licensing deal with a record label.
- Artists and bands that have created their own label solely to administer their recorded works are also eligible as unsigned artists. (AMRAP, 2015).

For the purposes of this research I have defined an independent musician as having no long-term third party contracts in place, specifically around song works and sound
recordings. They could have access to contracted industry professionals such as a booking agent and they may have their own legal business structure to administer their music business activities but they have no contracted third party manager, record label or publisher. Thus the research presented in this exegesis is aimed primarily toward self-managed, self-promoting artists that focus on presenting original song compositions. From a music business perspective, another defining feature of independent musicians is that the publishing rights created by the songwriting and the sound recording master rights are often controlled and owned by the independent artist in the absence of any third party contracts.

Beckman (2007) and later Bonin Rodriguez (2012) refer to these self-management activities as artist entrepreneurship recognizing this link between art and commerce. This effectively acknowledges the intuitive and learned business practices required of independent musicians in regard to running their small music business operations. A more in-depth exploration of the literature of artist entrepreneurship could be explored in research that focuses more on management practices per se. The scope of this research however is more orientated toward the management of independent music marketing strategies so from hereon the terms self-management and self-promotion will be used.

1.3.4 Music Marketing

Marketing has been defined as the activities undertaken to create and exchange products and values with others (Kotler, 2012, p. 4). Music marketing therefore looks at those activities related to the development and creation of music products involving song-writing, recording and performing song works and then sharing or exchanging these works to satisfy needs for entertainment and also social and cultural connections. According to the ‘marketing concept’, the success of a music business depends on knowing the needs and wants of your target audience and delivering an entertainment package that is more satisfying than competitors (Kotler, 2012, p. 15). From this music marketing perspective we can see that the contemporary practice of song-writing and
music production for commercial purposes is inextricably bound to music marketing practice.

The music marketing process involves shaping the product (the production of songs, sound recording, performances), packaging that product (physical packaging, format, artwork, photos, narratives, symbols, logos, image development), making it available for purchase (via distribution systems), and making people aware of it through promotional activities (traditional and digital communications) (M. Beard et al., 2006; Lathrop, 2003). The marketing process also incorporates product pricing in relation to market expectations to maximise product sales. Underlying this process is the role of market research and the awareness of who the target audience for the music is and their needs and behaviours and how the industry and its key players operate. In terms of marketing principles this market research should guide the development of artist marketing strategies and how to best allocate resources (Kotler, 2012; Pride et al., 2014).

1.3.5 Singer-songwriter

For the purposes of this study the main musical genre encompassing this album recording is that of the ‘singer-songwriter’. This genre features the music of solo songwriters who sing and perform their own compositions, often self-accompanied, most frequently on acoustic guitar and piano, and usually applied to performers in the folk, rock and pop genres (Shepherd & Horn, 2012, p. 198). Examples include Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Ryan Adams, Damien Rice and John Mayer. It is important to note that this category is very broad in scope and is usually accompanied by other genres to get more specific indications of the style of the artist.

Anderton (2013) offers an overview of the evolution of this genre over time. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s professional songwriters, who were used behind the scenes composing tracks for performers, did much of the songwriting. The performers would then communicate the song idea and capture the public’s attention. In the latter end of the
1960s, bands began composing and performing more of their own material. The folk revival in the 1960s also saw the emergence of the aforementioned singer-songwriter genre with the highly influential and respected Bob Dylan leading the way. “Singer-songwriters took on the roles of performer and songwriter in one package to perform original works though some, such as Elton John (with Bernie Taupin in particular), found collaborative songwriting to be the route to success” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 47). This genre is still attributed to solo artists writing and performing their own music and in many cases these artists may also be actively involved in producing the music as well. The evolution of home studio recording technology has also enabled singer-songwriters to produce their own sound recordings.

Genre interpretation can be highly subjective depending on who is analysing the music (e.g., record label or distributor, radio station, festival etc.) and from what country the genre is being analysed. Nonetheless, understanding music genre is vitally important to the development of marketing strategies and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

1.3.6 Music Production

Music production is the process of creating sound recordings from musical song compositions. Simpson (2006) offers a definition more focused on the contractual role of music producer which is “To deliver to [insert name here] a fully edited and leadered stereophonic master recording technically and commercially satisfactory to [insert name] for the manufacture and sale of phonograph records” (p. 457). He also offers that a producer “Is needed mainly to offer musical insight or to give new musical direction to a performer’s studio work” (p. 456). In essence a producer is a director of musical creativity and sound creation in the recording studio although there are many different views as to how this is done (Massey, 2000). Different genres also have different requirements of music production. For example producing a classical symphony requires more technical production skills and logistics management, while an electronic music
producer engages in more computer based software elements and midi processes and may work more autonomously.

What differentiates the sound engineer from the producer is the level of creative involvement in the process of developing the final recording. An engineer tends to be focused on the technical aspects of the process while the producer is more involved in creative decision making in the studio. Similar to a director in a play, a music producer should be skilled at curating musical performances. Additionally music production involves the hiring of musicians, the engineer, the studio and orchestrating and managing the whole creative process and driving the recording’s completion. In this project I took on the role of primary music producer but was assisted by an engineer who also helped technically produce the album.

1.3.7 Album

Since the mid twentieth century, record companies have released ‘singles’ on seven inch vinyl discs “which typically feature just one song per side, but [are] also used to refer to the sale and download of individual tracks from Internet stores” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 214). Today artists still promote singles but often as a digital release and usually not on vinyl. They still can include B-sides and sometimes form a collection. According to (RIAA, 2015) a single must contain no more than four different songs.

An Extended Player (EP) or a short form album features at least three tracks, generally no more than five tracks in total (RIAA, 2015). EPs’ have become a popular package of release for independent artists who may have a limited financial budget and are unable to produce an album but want to release more than a single track to showcase more of their material.

An album is a longer player than a single or EP hence the acronym ‘long player’ (LP) and is a commonly 10 -12 tracks long but at least six songs (RIAA, 2015). An album was
chosen as the focus of the creative portfolio after a reflective process outlined in Chapter 6. In short it was decided that an album would have more weight as a market offering, especially with the media and reviewers and that it was timely for myself as an artist to present an album work after two previous EP releases had been favourable reviewed. Additionally an album production is still the industry standard and provided a better scope for research than one single.

1.3.8 The “Digital Age” of the Music industries

Simpson (2006) categorises the various incarnations of the music industries as being:

- the mechanical age (pianolas and sheet music)
- the electronic age (microphones, analogue recorded product formats)
- the digital age (compact discs, downloading and streaming music online)

The emergence of the digital age has resulted in declining physical product sales and has fuelled fundamental changes in the business and economic structures of the music industries. This has influenced the ways music is being produced and consumed today. The trend has been driven by technological developments, the most visible aspect of which is the rise of digital music formats and the relocation of music distribution, storage and consumption to online sources (O'Reilly et al., 2013, p. 24; Wikström, 2013).

The term digital age first arose with compact discs (which stored the music as digital files) but upon closer investigation we can further divide the digital age into three distinct phases:

**Phase one:** Transition from cassettes and vinyl to compact disc technology. This occurred before the development of the Internet in 1982. This phase enabled each sold digital product (Compact Disc, Digital Audiotape, Digital Compact cassette,
to be exactly the same audio quality as the master digital recording (Simpson, 2006, p. 276).

Phase two emerged around the beginning of the 21st century with the sharing of digital downloads via MP3 compression technology developed by the Motion Picture Experts Group (MPEG). This was accelerated by the transition into broadband Internet connectivity (from the much slower dial up network), the commercialization and popularisation of the public Internet, and the emergence of peer-to-peer networks like Napster, which facilitated widespread music piracy (Ku, 2002). Legal digital downloading emerged in this phase and ITunes became the dominant e-tail intermediary (Wikstrom, 2014).

Phase three of the digital age is the current transition that has seen a significant shift to digital music streaming (free and via subscription) rather than digital product sales that result in ownership. Streaming based models such as Deezer and Spotify have become established in the marketplace. Contributing factors in the rise of streaming models include the development of fast portable Internet based data transfer systems and the relationship major record labels have developed with streaming services. Major labels now own a 20% share in one of the largest streaming services; Spotify (Resnikoff, 2014). Strategically the growth in these streaming models has reduced the financial impact of digital music piracy (Brandle, 2014; Wikstrom, 2014).

Figure 1 Digital revenue breakdown by format, 2008-2013
The trend presented in Figure 1 above confirms the latest transition from Phase two into Phase three of the digital age (IFPI, 2014a, p. 9). This latest phase also features a complete transformation of the media industry as mentioned earlier.

On the media revolution associated with the digital age, Dubber (2012) states:

[We’re] living in a Digital Age, in the same way we were living in an Electric Age, and before that, in a Print Age. We were once in a Scribal Age, and before that - an Oral Age. I believe that this dominant form of communication absolutely shapes the way in which we understand the world around us. (p. 34)

Wikstrom (2014) also points out that this digital age of music has changed the music listening experience from ‘playing music’ to ‘playing with music’ highlighting the role of social media as well as the role of interactive streaming interfaces. Despite the current transformations however Wikstrom contends that much remains before the industry leaves the physical world behind it (Wikstrom, 2014, p. 23). Therefore the definition of the digital age for the purposes of this project incorporates all three digital phases because the industry is transitioning from the first two phases into phase three. It is important to point out that “the world music market is highly diverse, with markets growing at different speeds and favouring different consumption models” (IFPI, 2014a, p. 9). The discussion above indicates the overall direction of the digital evolution driven by the worlds largest music markets.

### 1.4 Concluding Remarks

This study focuses on the creative practices of contemporary music (songwriting and music production) and independent music marketing. Both sectors are part of the broader creative industries, and as a self-managed ISS, both practices are necessary in developing a successful career in the modern music industries. One could say that the contemporary
music practice, from a marketing perspective, is more orientated around product strategies but considerations of promotion, distribution and pricing also need attention in the process of releasing music successfully in the digital phase of the music industries.

Using a practice-based approach this exegesis will examine the decision making process of an ISS undertaking an album release in the digital age exploring how these different creative practices interrelate. It will offer a practical perspective, using analytical autoethnography, to highlight different strategies that can be employed by an ISS to produce, promote and distribute their music in a rapidly changing marketing environment.
Chapter 2 - Methodology

This Chapter provides an outline of the methodology of this project. As stated in Chapter 1, this methodology identifies the process of writing, producing and releasing an album as involving two distinct processes; ‘music and performance’ processes and ‘marketing and advertising’ processes.

This Chapter sets out the benefits of practice-based research as a method of inquiry when identifying specific aspects of creative practices used by an ISS working within the music industries. It provides a description of the autoethnographic method of primary data collection adopted in this project and the use of grounded theory based techniques for collection and analysis, which includes the case for an integrated literature review.

2.1 Identifying a research gap

Over the last two decades, there has been rapid change in the music industries. Much of the discussion about the opportunities and threats that this change has created has come from peak industry organisations and major recording industry companies. There has been much less published that discuss the effect that the digital age has had on the practice of independent musicians.

Many mainly prescriptive books and articles have been written on music marketing (Baker, 2005; Lathrop, 2003; Nevue, 2011; Spellman, 2000). There are also many authors that have published research texts and arts marketing guides from an industry perspective (Boorsma, 2006; Butler, 2000; Colbert, Nantel, Bilodeau, & Poole, 1994; Crealey, 2003; Fillis, 2006; Gahan, Minahan, & Glow, 2007; Hill, 2003; Larsen & O'Reilly, 2010), but only a limited number of these have applied specific marketing theory to the music industries and independent musicians and even less so in the academic field.
O’Rielly et al., (2013) identified this gap in music marketing literature stating:

Much of the marketing literature around music has to do with either the commercial expediency or utility of music as a facilitator of the sales process in advertising and promotion, or its use in elevators and supermarkets. (p.vii)

The methodology of this project seeks to address this perceived deficiency in the literature. I have taken a practical approach to examining the steps required in the creative process; producing a professional sound recording and the planning strategies needed to effectively market that recording for release to a market place. My aims for this project are to discuss and document the actual methodology of creative practice and relate and compare this practice directly with industry examples and relevant marketing theories.

Rather than purely summarise the approach being advocated by other independent music-marketing specialists, this work is centred on the practice of artists’ conceptualising and releasing musical works in the digital age.

2.2 Researcher Background – The participant observer

This research project has been inspired by a twenty-year career in both the participation of music creation and performance but also over ten years in the education of the role of marketing on this process. The majority of my experience has been in the independent music sector. My work with a non-profit organization called Musicoz from 2003-2007 exposed me to the plights of thousands of independent music aspirants all vying for a share of the lucrative music market. In this role I was in charge of sorting through over 800 entries in the singer-songwriter category of the Musicoz awards. During this time, and more recently as an associate lecturer at Southern Cross University and lecturer at the Queensland conservatorium of music (Griffith University) in Brisbane, and the SAE Institute, I have anecdotally interviewed and had in-depth discussions with hundreds of
musicians and songwriters about music marketing and business fundamentals. I have attempted to guide them in their efforts to plot viable career paths in the music industries and presented the myriad of alternatives available in all aspects of music production and marketing. This culminated in the writing of The Independent Musician study guide in 2012 for Southern Cross University.

As a member of this musical community myself (full artist details in media kit Appendix 2: Artist Biography), I found myself constantly needing to switch perspectives from that of a music industries professional and marketer, to that of an artist, a creator and a visionary. The ability to shift between the different perspectives enabled me to have more theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978) in explaining marketing concepts to artists and it is from this unique perspective that this research has arisen. Bilton and Leary (2002) encourage the development of new perspectives on creativity arguing that management and marketing tasks should also be viewed as part of the creative process rather than creating some kind of artificial separation of creative and managerial functions (Bilton & Leary, 2002, p. 49). They contend that ‘creatives’ have a unique opportunity to approach management and marketing with divergent thinking conducive to the development of new ideas and approaches to these functions. The concept of theoretical sensitivity is explained in more depth within section 2.5.

Creating art and music tends to provide a deeper level of gratification for most artists as opposed to focusing on marketing processes and tasks. As a practising artist of over twenty years I can also share this from direct experience. I am currently lecturing business related subjects for artists across a range of art forms and have observed that course content is usually based around the arts practice per se and less on the marketing skills necessary to promote the art and establish viable careers. There is even less of an emphasis on marketing processes and how these may impact on those creative decisions. The problem is that in order to have a commercially viable career, artists also need to focus on marketing processes in order to facilitate the exchange of their creative works in a market place for financial gains. This presents a gap in understanding or a problem for
those artists who have commercial goals and seek careers in their respective fields, but may have little marketing knowledge or expertise to make that happen.

The methodology of autoethnography has been selected specifically to take advantage of the unique analytical perspective held by myself, the researcher. Participant observation techniques enable the researcher to immerse into the society at a deeper level to get a better perspective on what the members may be seeing. Participant observation extends beyond naturalistic observation because the observer is a ‘player’ in the action (Barrett & Bolt, 2010). A twenty-year career as an ISS and over ten years of lecturing in the field of arts and music marketing and digital marketing has provided me with much of the preliminary research into the topic. The practice-based approach in this study placed me as a participant observer within the context of the independent music community in Australia but also as a marketing practioner, and educator in the digital age of the global music industries.

2.3 **An Interdisciplinary /International Approach to Understanding Creative Practice**

This study is based in Australia but also acknowledges the opportunities for commercial and artistic success facilitated by the emergence of global Internet based social media, distribution and promotion networks. These networks allow an independent recording artist, to distribute and market creative work internationally.

This research project retains a focus on understanding the creative processes involved in producing and marketing recorded musical works and is written from an interdisciplinary point of view that incorporates both contemporary music practice (songwriting and producing new recorded music products) and contemporary music marketing practice (branding, promoting, distributing and pricing those products).
The creative portfolio that has been developed within this project also reflects this. The production of the album (LP) focuses more on songwriting and music production practice whilst the development of the associated branded marketing materials and marketing strategy explores contemporary independent music marketing practice. This research has been designed specifically to explore the interactions between these two areas of the creative industries. It recognises that an independent artist seeking out a career within the music industries needs to be thinking more broadly beyond the production process into contemporary music marketing practice.

There is some agreement amongst a range of authors that the processes of production and marketing of a creative project in the digital age “can only be understood properly through multiple lenses and levels of observation, and they are often embedded in multifaceted contexts with economic, cultural, legal and political elements” (Cheng, Birkinshaw, Lessard, & Thomas, 2014, p. 643). By employing the methodology of the creative practitioner and documenting the creative process I use an ‘artistic lens’ to reflect on the decision-making processes involved in producing and promoting creative work in the digital age. This enables the project to be reflective and informative and offer “greater explanatory power than (methodologies) based on a single discipline”(Cheng et al., 2014, p. 643).

This multi-faceted approach to discussing creative and marketing processes in the music industries is also supported by O’Reilly (2013) et al:

Considering the major changes in the music business environment that began in the nineties, it seems that music marketing theory needs to become a fusion project that integrates insights from a range of disciplines into something more holistic and open than classical theory allows. (vii)
This is also further supported by the definitions provided in Chapter 1 that introduced a more pluralistic view of the music industries and creative industries that recognises the multiplicity of organisations in these sectors all performing a range of different functions across a range of different disciplines (Burnard, 2012; Williamson & Cloonan, 2007).

Summarising I see my creative practice as one that involves developing creative music works but as an independent self-managed artist, also involving creative management and marketing practices. The practice-based approach undertaken explores these links and has resulted in this exegesis as well as a creative portfolio that reflects this interdisciplinary approach.

2.4 The Case For Practice-based Research

Candy (2006) draws a distinction between two types of practice related research: practice-based where the creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge and practice-led which leads primarily “to new understandings about practice” (p 1). This study engages both aspects of practice research. The central focus of this research is an examination of the arts practice used in the development of a creative portfolio of musical works (an album) and the associated promotional materials. The reflections embedded in this written exegesis provide a picture of creative practice in the digital age and analyse the role of marketing processes at various stages in the overall creative production process. The reflections within the written analysis are given meaning by the creative portfolio accompanying it. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two as the creative artefact is not an explanation in itself: it requires linguistic description that relates the development and nature of the artefact to understandings about creative process (Scrivener, 2002).

According to Smith and Dean (2009) arts based research need not be treated monolithically but rather can be an activity where research is the result of shaping an artwork; “or research which is the documentation, theorisation and contextualisation of an
artwork –and the process of making it –by its creator” (p. 3). They also contend that there is a new responsibility on the part of arts researchers to take up the challenge of theorising their practice and in doing so creating new knowledge that is individually and culturally transformative. Barrett and Bolt (2010) also propose that creative practice results in the production of knowledge and highlight the importance also of the written accounts or exegesis.

2.5 The Case for Analytical Autoethnography and the use of Grounded Theory Techniques

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that “seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Birks & Mills, 2010, p. 11). Autoethnography is a research method that has been “widely used in the study of human creativity” (Pace, 2012, p. 20), and is an established methodology for arts and social science research especially in the analysis of complex creative and psychological processes (L. Anderson, 2006; P. Atkinson, 2006; Chang, 2008; C. Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010; C Ellis & Bochner, 2006; C. S. Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Pace, 2012; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

The Australian independent music community provides the ethnographic context of the study. Ethnographic fieldwork research was developed originally for anthropologists “who wished to study a society or some aspect of a society, culture or group in depth” (Bell, 2003, p. 13).

Autoethnography has been considered an appropriate method of research because of the psychological nature of the subject matter but also because of the unique insights and theoretical sensitivity brought about by my own experiences as a musician and marketer as outlined in the researcher background. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe theoretical sensitivity as a personal quality of the researcher that indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning contained in data (p. 41). Researchers are a sum of all they have
experienced. The concept of theoretical sensitivity acknowledges this fact and accounts for it in the research process. As a researcher becomes immersed in the data, their level of theoretical sensitivity to analytical possibilities will increase (Aarts, Chalker, & Weiner, 2014). Autoethnography supports the participant observer position and theoretical sensitivity because it acknowledges that the researcher has direct experiences as a member of that society. This affords an even deeper insight into the behaviours of that society especially from a psychological viewpoint. The ‘auto’ part also recognises that the researcher may also have a history of experiences in that community and recognises that this ‘autobiographical’ information could be useful in developing a deeper level of analysis. As stated in the research background I have been a practicing independent singer-songwriter and artist manager for over twenty years, and have also worked as a music industry professional cultivating the careers of independent musicians. This research aims to draw on my prior experience and knowledge as an artist and songwriter, an artist manager, music industries professional and marketing academic in order to extract meaning in the critical reflections of my own practice.

This exegesis accompanying the creative work documents the process of producing and packaging an album (LP) and the development of the associated branded promotional artefacts. Rather than being a descriptive story of my journey, I am particularly interested in the rationale behind each decision and the interplay between creativity and marketing processes. Additionally the use of a comparative, integrated literature review will enable the analysis to be more transferable than just a story as this quote suggests:

Look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story—and that's nice—but people do that on Oprah [a U.S.-based television program] every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it
around these tools and literature and just frame it as 'my story,' then
why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25
times a day on TV? (P. Atkinson, 2006, p. 402)

Thus I am augmenting my own reflections with relevant literature and associated
concepts that will contribute to the depth of the analysis. Despite its growing popularity
as a research method, there is also controversy associated with autoethnography.
Fundamentally the method challenges the positivist paradigm because it focuses less on
objective and scientific analysis but more on emotion and meaning. Much of the criticism
revolves around the nature of narrative ethnographies that tell stories but may not
establish facts. Ellis and Bochner (2006) defend this evocative aspect of autoethnography
and state “if you turn a story told into a story analysed, you sacrifice the story at the alter
of traditional sociological rigor” (p. 4). Anderson (2006) however acknowledges this
critique and proposes that analytical ethnography has a purpose that goes beyond the
documentation of personal experience and uses “empirical data to gain insight into some
broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves” (p. 387).
This analytic autoethnography is growing in support and is the method used in this
research. It is further enhanced by the use of grounded theory techniques to support the
collection and analysis. Pace (2012) supports the pairing of autoethnography with
grounded theory analytic strategies and believes “the thoughtful application of mixed
research methods can provide new insights into challenging problems such as the study of
human creativity” (p. 13).

By cross-referencing the autoethnographic reflections with related theoretical
perspectives it is hoped that the research will have more objectivity and be more useful to
others. In fact avoiding what is colloquially known as ‘navel gazing’ was always going to
be one of the biggest challenges in the project. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2012) also
recommend this contrasting of personal experience against existing research, interviewing
cultural members and examining relevant cultural artefacts (p. 3).
I used the grounded theory technique of comparative analysis to integrate a full literature review when I began analysing the data. Morse (2002) concurs with this approach because it helps the researcher develop an original perspective on what the findings contain. At this point a synthesis can occur allowing for the research findings to be contextualised by existing literature (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). The full literature review for this project is integrated with the data analysis in line with grounded theory strategies recommended by Glaser (1967) and others (Birks & Mills, 2010; Glaser, 1978; Goulding, 2002; Lempert, 2007; Pace, 2012; Stern, 2007; A. Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Whilst a preliminary literature review was done in the background research and for developing the original research proposal, the decision to integrate the literature review with the analysis can provide more academic rigor and objectivity to the research findings.

The research took place in a naturalistic setting where I imbedded myself into the independent music sub-culture of Australia. According to Birks (2011) the salient techniques of grounded theory involve; coding and categorisation of data, writing memos, concurrent data collection and analysis and constant comparative analysis and theoretical sensitivity. The preliminary research and literature review was used as a reference to begin the process of coding and categorising the data around themes. Mind maps were particularly useful for me in this stage. Field notes and memos’ were generated via tools such as word documents, mind-maps, mobile phone notes, short audio logs and some filming behind the scenes. Detailed memoing is vital in establishing quality processes in grounded theory (C. Ellis et al., 2010; Reed-Danahay, 1997). A vigorous approach to documenting each decision and its rationale was the cornerstone of this approach, “the prime rule” as Glaser (1978) puts it.

In summary, the methodology has its foundations in practice research and utilizes an autoethnographic approach to analyse the processes involved in the creative practices of music and marketing as they relate to myself an ISS. Grounded theory techniques have
been used to collect data and to guide a discussion that reflects theoretical sensitivity and uses an integrated literature review to increase transferability of the key findings.
Chapter 3 - Releasing Music in the Digital Age: An industry perspective

This Chapter examines contemporary theory and practice around producing and marketing independent music in the digital age and presents key issues faced by an ISS undertaking an album release project from a broader industry perspective.

3.1 The economic significance of independent music

From a market share perspective the independent music sector, defined as record labels not owned or directly controlled by the major labels, has grown significantly since the turn of the century, to a point where it represents the second largest global market share of the recorded music market (in relation to individual market share ownership of the major labels) and independents earned over half of all Grammy nominations in 2014 (WIN, 2015).

Chris Anderson first pointed out the potential of the Internet for the independent music sector in his seminal article in 2004, entitled the ‘Long Tail’:

Forget squeezing millions from a few megahits at the top of the charts.
The future of entertainment is in the millions of niche markets at the shallow end of the bit-stream. What's really amazing about the Long Tail is the sheer size of it. Combine enough non-hits on the Long Tail and you've got a market bigger than the hits (p. 177).

There is considerable debate around the significance of this ‘long tail’ theory. Elberse (2008) presents a very strong case for the mass media driven ‘blockbusters’ continued domination in terms of popularity and commerciality and she questions the significance of the ‘long tail’. Others have also concurred with this (Consulting, 2014; Kotler, 2012; Tan & Netessine, 2009). This is a very broad debate and one that is beyond the scope of
this exegesis. From an industry level it is apparent that the market has opened somewhat and the independents are beginning to gain market share. According to Billboard Magazine, 2014’s year-end Nielsen Music statistics (based on master ownership) reveal that Independent labels were 35.1% of the overall U.S. recorded music industries, up from 34.6% in 2013 and 30.2% in 2012. Pandora founder Tim Westergren states that songs from outside the major labels make up 50% of the content streamed and “there are artists who were invisible in the music business who now get exposed to an audience that is big enough to support them. There’s an opportunity for a really well-run band to take control of their careers” (C. Atkinson, 2015).

From the above statistics it is difficult to clearly identify what share of this proportion is actually generated by independent musicians (according to the definition of independent music established for this exegesis that focuses more on self-managed /promoted artists). The assumption could be made that the long tail consists of thousands of micro, small and medium size music enterprises and business entities. It may be a healthy market in terms of overall financial growth however it is also fiercely competitive because of the numbers involved. Earning the attention of music consumers remains a serious challenge for independents competing in the music industries. In the Australian setting, local statistics would indicate that individual independent musicians are still struggling to rely on their creative practice to earn a living:

- Throsby & Zednik (2010) estimate the median creative income from creative work is $7,000 for practising professional musicians and $8,000 for composers.

- Recent ABS figures show around 500,000 adult Australians were involved in writing song lyrics, or mixing or composing music, including digital composition in 2010-11. Very few of these participants earned any wage or salary for their engagement. Further, most of those who did, earned less than 25 per cent of their total income in this way (Arts, 2015).
• In the 2006 Australian census around 7,800 people reported primary musician occupations such as instrumental musicians, singers, composers or music directors. This increased slightly to around 7,900 in the 2011 census. Relative to the 12,500 thought to be currently practicing professionally, or the 87,000 of those registered with APRA | AMCOS, it is clear that considerable numbers of musicians are not working in musician occupations as their main job (Arts, 2015).

In conclusion, the independent music sector is growing on a global scale, however individual independent musicians who are not being supported by a third party record label still struggle to have the creative practice of songwriting and music production as their primary career. Throsby & Zednik (2010) do point out that marketing and business skills are lacking in the artistic community and it is proposed that strengthening the creative practice of marketing could assist independent musicians in taking more advantage of the opportunities presented in the new digital marketing environment.

3.2 General music industries trends

O’Reilly, Larsen and Kubacki (2013) stated of the digital age:

The digital revolution and declining album sales have fuelled drastic changes in the business and economic structures of the music industries, influencing the ways music is being produced and consumed today. The dominant trend has been driven by technological developments, the most visible aspect of which is the rise of digital music formats and the relocation of music distribution, storage and consumption to online sources. (p. 24)

This is a good summary of an industry facing enormous restructuring on many levels. In fact, with so many changes occurring, creating a definitive list of all the different trends is difficult and beyond the scope of this exegesis. I will however outline in more depth some key trends that are worthwhile considering as an ISS releasing music in this phase of the
digital age.

3.2.1 Trend 1: Transition of physical to digital music products

According to the IFPI Digital music report 2014, the current trend shows a move from ownership (of digital music files and CDs) to subscription-based services (like Spotify and Pandora) where consumers are enjoying access to millions of tracks for free (supported by advertising based models) or with a premium monthly payment. Consumers now have largely unfettered access to a collection of millions of albums, which is unprecedented in the history of the music industries. Other changes include the role of social media as a new ‘influencer’ of music taste and a distribution platform (e.g., YouTube, Soundcloud), the growth of online and mobile marketing (Dubber, 2012; Lathrop, 2013; O'Reilly et al., 2013; Wikstrom, 2014).

3.2.2 Trend 2: Impact of music piracy on sales

It is now commonly known that music piracy has contributed to an overall decline in recorded music sales (Beekhuyzen, Liisa von, & Nielsen, 2011; Brandle, 2014; IFPI, 2014a; O'Reilly et al., 2013; Wikstrom, 2014). According to the IFPI (2014) recorded music sales have dropped from an industry peak of $36.9 billion in 2000 to $15 billion in 2014. However there is also some evidence that piracy can act as a promotional tool for an artist. Mortimer, Nosko & Sorensen (2012) provide evidence suggesting that while file sharing reduced album sales, it simultaneously increased demand for concerts. This effect is most pronounced for small artists, perhaps because “file-sharing boosts awareness of such artists “ (Mortimer et al., 2012).

Additionally the rise in live performance, merchandising and publishing incomes have resulted in a much lower overall decline in total music sales over the same period (Consulting, 2014; Music, 2013). This represents a real opportunity for independent musicians to focus on multiple revenue streams to offset the declining recorded music sales.
3.2.3 Trend 3: The falling ‘perceived’ value of music and freemium strategies

There is a trend in the music industries for artists to make music available for no charge to consumers in order to raise their profile in the music industries and to develop direct marketing connections via getting email contacts in return. This strategy needs to be treated with some caution, as despite an increase in profile and social media attention it may impact negatively on overall recorded music sales. Dewan and Ramaprasad (2014) also raise the issue of free sampling impacting record sales:

In a majority of blog posts at the song level, we find that the bloggers provide a mechanism for users to sample the music via streaming. As a result, any potential positive effects of blog buzz on song sales appears to be swamped out by the negative effect of free sampling on sales. (p. 26)

In terms of fundamental marketing principles there is also the consideration that lower prices, in this case free, may create a perception that somehow the creative product is not worthy of attention or may be of low quality (Kotler, 2012, p. 288). Controversial American music industries analyst Bob Lefsetz (2014) made a statement anecdotally that “if you don’t pay for it you won’t listen to it” which also supports this notion to be careful about giving music away. In his blog he cites the example of one of the biggest bands in the world, U2, causing a big controversy by giving their music away for free via Apple. The problem in this case was that consumers did not ask for the album and they were automatically presented the album directly into their iTunes library. Many consumers felt like it was an intrusion and the strategy overall was considered flawed. In fact an app needed to be developed to allow consumers to remove the music from their libraries (Lefsetz, 2014a). Independent musicians need to be mindful of these changing perceptions in the market place and consider the importance of merchandise, premium
packages and other ‘bundled’ inclusions to raise the perception of value and uniqueness of their creative offerings (Masnick, 2009; Zhu & MacQuarrie, 2003).

Freemium strategies are a business approach becoming increasingly popular in the digital economy. Essentially they are a marketing strategy using two products or services, or a combination of products and services, where one item is provided at no charge while a premium option is sold at a positive price to the same general group of customers (C. Anderson, 2009; Pujol, 2010). In the music industries this is often applied where an artist offers free lower quality versions of songs or limited song giveaways to fans but offers deluxe premium packages to more dedicated fans at a premium price. Trent Reznor was a pioneer of this approach and successfully utilised this strategy to sell a limited edition run of 2500 copies of a premium package including a book, vinyl, CD, a lossless data format audio file download link and additional merchandise at a unit price of $US 300.00 in just 36 hours grossing over $750,000 for a product he was giving away online (Masnick, 2009). Radiohead also released the album In Rainbows for a ‘pick your own price’ method initially (three month period) and achieved very good commercial and chart success overall, entering the UK and US albums chart at number one with the album (Bourreau, Dogan, & Hong, 2014). It must be noted however that both these artists did come to prominence with the support of major labels in the earlier phase of their careers so already had market presence generated in an older phase of the music industry. A more recent successful example of this freemium strategy is an independent artist by the name of Josh Garrels whose album Home that he gave away (for a limited time) was downloaded 45,000 times but it became his best selling album and charted at number 83 in the Billboard 200 (H. McIntyre, 2015).

3.2.4 Trend 4: Lower barriers to entry into the music industries

Developments in recording technology have seen a shift to software-enabled recording that has significantly reduced the cost of entry-level equipment, and improved the quality
and capacity of home recording (Leyshon, 2009, p. 1325). This has enabled many independent artists to:

- Do considerable amounts of pre-studio preparation work for recording projects.
- Over dub tracks at home, saving in terms of overall project budget costs.
- Complete professional, broadcast quality and commercially competitive recordings from a home studio.

There has also been a trend towards ISSs’ and others to self-produce recordings driven by this opportunity of cheaper recording equipment but also because of budget necessities.

Today you're both the creator and the producer. And so many producers are creators. The roles have merged. Knowing how to work the equipment and get what you want, and experience happy accidents, pays dividends down the road. (Lefsetz, 2014b)

It is important to note that whilst there may be lower barriers to entry in terms of the industrial process of producing professional, commercially ready recordings, it is also means there is a lot more competition. From a consumer’s point of view there are a lot more ‘substitute’ products (Kotler, 2012, p. 196). Those artists that choose not to distribute on the big streaming platforms are more susceptible to this substitution effect where a consumer may search for the music and finding it unavailable may quickly forget about that artist and move on to another. Whilst there may be many artists that can produce quality creative products, they still need to be promoted to gain recognition in the marketplace. Herein lies a real opportunity for those independent musicians that can differentiate themselves via creative and engaging promotional campaigns that can stand out in the market place.
Traditional mass media marketing methods have been augmented by lower cost social media marketing and direct marketing methods allowing an opportunity for artists to engage in lower cost promotional activities. In the past promotion was dominated by higher cost promotion and advertising campaigns in radio television and print media to which major labels had greater access (Anderton et al., 2013; O'Reilly et al., 2013; Ogden, Ogden, & Long, 2011; Simpson, 2006). Distribution once dominated by the labels has now been opened up to any individual willing to pay for the services of a music aggregator (Galuszka, 2015; Mortimer et al., 2012).

In conclusion there are many great opportunities for independent artists to engage in the music industries that did not exist before the turn of the century. However there still remains the question of allocating time, resources and the necessary skills to take advantage of these and despite these lower barriers to entry, record companies are still by far the largest investors in artists’ careers (IFPI, 2014b).

3.2.5 Trend 5: Increasing importance of data in informing music marketing decisions

The following is an excellent example of the increasing demands for music industry participants to adopt a professional marketing approach that utilises the power of data to help guide the development of marketing strategies.

Record companies are increasingly turning to digital data analysis as a means of developing targeted marketing campaigns. They are also beginning to see ways in which fan data can be used to drive tailored promotions to better engage consumers. Getting this analysis right will have positive repercussions for recorded music revenue. (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2014)
Independent artists are also seeing this value of data to guide strategy. Using Trent Reznor again as a case study; he gave away a copy of his album Ghosts (I-IV) but in order to get the album consumers were asked to complete a large survey that was later used to develop a detailed fan database. Additionally he used an Internet data aggregating and collation service to carefully map where downloads were occurring and then set up a tour based on this data (Masnick, 2009). Music marketers are starting to realise the value in analytical tools (such as Google Analytics, Facebook and YouTube Insights etc.,) to help them make better decisions and independent musicians can also use these tools to help inform marketing strategies as many of them are free or low cost.

3.2.6 Trend 6: The rise of crowd funding as an alternative financing option for artists and crowd-generated marketing

Crowd-funding is a form of collective financing (or micro-patronage) commonly managed through the Internet and used by a wide variety of organisations including charities, political campaigns, and start-up businesses (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 42). The evolution of crowd funding has been driven by the growth in social media platforms on the Internet. These crowd-funding platforms allow consumers to effectively directly ‘sponsor’ artists. An independent artist with a large, engaged social media network of fans can obtain financial support by pre-selling their album to their network or offering other incentives. For example if 500 supporters from their fan-base, social network as well as the crowd funding platform’s online community invest $20 each in pre-purchasing an album, that artist has a budget of $10,000 to produce the album and break even on the project before even commencing recording. Moreover they also have a fan-base established for the CD launch. Australian independent folk act Starboard Canons used this approach successful pre-selling 500 CD’s and having a sold out album launch (M.Bone, personal communication, November 1, 2014).

Crowd funding is linked to the concept discussed by Kotler et al., (2012) called ‘crowd generated marketing’ whereby consumers can also play a role in participating in other
marketing activities like, product development, distribution and of course promotion (p.394). Artist Imogen Heap is a great proponent of this and she has regularly crowd sourced sound samples and lyrics (for product development), utilised street teams (for distribution and promotion) and even used crowd sourced audio-visual content to make a music video (Minds, 2012). Baym (2013) investigated these new interactive relationships between fans and artists and points out that it can resemble more of a community which provides social utility that augments the satisfaction derived from the music and in some cases is regarded even more important.

3.2.7 Trend 7: The growing importance of social media as a communication platform for artists

This trend relates closely to the crowd sourcing evolution. The connectivity and interactive nature of social media has seen the development of closer links between fans and artists (Anderton et al., 2013; Beekhuyzen et al., 2011; Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2014; Donnelly, 2014; Dubber, 2007, 2011; Jetto, 2011; Ly, 2012; O'Reilly et al., 2013; Padgett & Rolston, 2013; Tu, Zhao, & Jones, 2014; Wendel, 2008). This is a new channel of media and communication that wasn’t part of the traditional music industries, which relied heavily on mass media as discussed earlier. Social media is part of the commonly referred to phase of the Internet known as ‘Web 2.0’. This refers “to the growth of read-write applications that foster interactivity and communication between users, such as social networking and blogs” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 110). This closeness and immediacy has led to artists reaching out more to fans and offering them much more content beyond just the music such as behind the scenes footage, opportunities to be backstage, interactive music videos and more. Thus the relationship between fans and artists is now ongoing and not just tied to music release cycles. New demands for ongoing entertainment and content are emerging. In fact YouTube, which is the second largest search engine in the world behind Google, and the largest music streaming service (Chaffey & Smith, 2013) has become the focus of much music consumption and necessitates a strong channel presence by independent artists as a key promotional tool.
Trent Reznor (Masnick, 2009), Imogen Heap (Moisio & Rökman, 2011) Amanda Palmer (Padgett & Rolston, 2013) and Icelandic art-house band Sigur Ros (Mitchell, 2009) are all well documented independent music case studies pointing to this future of interactive fan driven marketing. It is widely documented that social media is a low-cost promotional tool that offers great opportunity to the ISS to develop a fan base.

In summary this initial investigation into the rapidly evolving music industries and media landscape highlights the need for independent musicians to be actively monitoring their marketing environment. This enables them to identify key opportunities and threats that inform marketing strategies. Strategies that are founded on market research rather than just opinion. This trend links strongly to the evolution of new marketing approaches in the music industries now discussed.

3.3 Traditional verses new marketing approaches in the music industries

Historically, ‘major’ record labels such as, Sony, Universal, EMI and Warner Music have dominated the music industries, especially in the period between the 1950s through to the late 1990s. This has been has been widely documented (Ogden et al., 2011; Simpson, 2006). During this period major record labels invested substantial income into making sound recordings and marketing these in return for a profit on the sales of those sound recordings. Their interest was vested in sound recording copyrights. Publishing companies signed songwriters and had financial investment into the assignment and licensing of the song works’ or compositional copyrights. Utilising specialized teams of technical engineers and producers, record labels produced and promoted professional sound recordings unaffordable to most independent artists. Established relationships and partnerships with the dominant mass media outlets provided the marketing and promotion opportunities for the music produced by artists signed to major labels; especially commercial radio where radio stations are dependent on quality recorded music to attract listeners and therefore advertising dollars and the record companies in turn get promotion for those sound recordings (Ogden et al., 2011).
The Internet and the evolution of digital media and its related technologies has leveled the playing field for smaller entities seeking to participate in the music industries, as evidenced by the growth in the independent music sector discussed earlier. The transition from the traditional marketing model into this new digital marketing environment is summarised by this quote:

The ‘traditional’ music industry model for aspirant artists/performers starts with writing or choosing songs, playing live to build a following, seeking publishing and recording deals, and the recording in a professional studio with the resultant record manufactured and promoted through magazines, radio and television to drive retail sales. Every aspect of this flow model has been disrupted by the digitalization of the music industries since the 1980’s. Digital recording, distribution, marketing and sales have become commonplace as have financially affordable tools for achieving a professional product. (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 1)

This digital revolution consequently has had a significant effect on the marketing planning and development of creative music products. Musicians and songwriters are now utilising new technologies and websites to:

- Produce commercial sound recordings using an array of affordable software and hardware solutions.
- Instantly share music through social media which is also used for collaborations and networking (via websites like Sound Cloud, Dropbox, Indaba Music, YouTube etc.).
- Fund new ideas through crowd funding (e.g., Pozible, Kick Starter, Pledge Music, Sellaband).
- Distribute music globally.
• Promote music via websites, social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube etc.) and mobile applications.

• Monitoring marketing activities using analytics software (like Google analytics, Facebook insights, YouTube insights etc.)

These points summarise key tools independent musicians can use to commercially promote and distribute their works to an international market in the digital age.

Traditional marketing approaches in the past have relied on producing an album and then developing a marketing strategy once finished (Ogden et al., 2011). This traditional marketing approach is now being superseded. The digitalisation of the music industries is requiring more modern approaches that see the marketing process begin even before the creative work has begun (Padgett & Rolston, 2013). Indeed, it is proposed that prior planning that acknowledges the whole process of marketing (from product development to distribution and promotion) helps independent musicians focus their limited time, energy and resources to gain not only better quality music products but also increase the quality of the associated branded promotional materials. An example of this may be the artist releases video /image content in the writing phase, stimulating initial interest then using behind the scenes videos /photos of the recording process to post on social media platforms before the production is even released. This creates ‘buzz’ and in turn increases the chances to gain recognition in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

3.4 **Summary of specific issues facing independent artists marketing their own creative works**

As stated earlier, that whilst these changes in the new digital marketing environment offer many opportunities for the independent musician, they also present a range of issues for those self managed and self promoted artists faced with the enormous task of doing it all themselves.
My aim was to reflect on these issues in my own practice-based approach and offer in my conclusions and key findings some perspective on the questions raised by each issue.

3.4.1 **Issue 1: Motivation to market music on a limited time, budget and skill set.**

Many independent musicians have limited marketing budgets and are forced to carry out most of the marketing activities themselves in the initial stages of their careers. This requires an enormous time investment that many would prefer to be using for creative purposes. Many artists and musicians view marketing as a ‘necessary evil’ and a dichotomy can exist between creative and marketing processes preventing the latter to be executed effectively. Famous folk songwriter Pete Seeger says, “I write a song because I want to. I think the moment you start writing it to make money, you’re starting to kill yourself artistically” (Zollo & King, 2003, p. 9). Negus (1995) also highlights the inherent tension between commerce and creativity and explores classical Marxism views that see commerce corrupting art with its oppressive commercial system.

Cave (2000) however highlights the need for creative artistic output that requires support of other commercial inputs to realise its success in the market place. “While creative possibilities are always abundant, creative realisations are sometimes not” (p.6). Cave (2000) goes far as to say that some of the marketing processes are ‘humdrum’ inputs in the eyes of the artist (p. 221). This could be a limiting view for artist’s to hold and there is an opportunity to apply some of the same creative skills used in making art and apply these to marketing and management processes. Ex-CD baby founder (the biggest e-tailor of independent music in the world) Derek Sivers is a strong proponent for the independent artist to maintain a creative approach beyond songwriting and the studio and into the marketing process (Oszajca, 2014).
Dubber (2012) addresses this dichotomy directly for musicians and supports the notion that with no commerce there can be no music. In fact they are inextricably linked:

Sure, some music is ruined by attempts to reshape it for greater commercial acceptance, but in fact the more fundamental truth is without commerce, no music. If there were not concerts, records, marketing, patronage, equipment sellers, promoters, retailers, managers, professional teachers, venues, publishers and music press, there would pretty much be no music, as we know it. Music and commerce are inextricably linked. (p. 13)

This is also reflected in the work of Frith and Horne (1987) who argue that commerce and creativity are closely connected and links can be made between commercial and artistic success.

As an independent musician creating works, I can relate to the dichotomy between creativity and commerce and I have been exploring these feelings for many years when producing music and rationalizing my thoughts behind key decisions such as editing songs for radio, changing lyrics for wider appeal, manipulating image and so on. Dubber’s quote has resonance for the necessity to accept commercial and marketing processes around creativity. Dennis et al., (2009) also conclude that a marketing orientation doesn’t necessarily threaten artistic integrity (p. 748). However this still does not address some of the deeper issues attached to ‘selling’ a work that may have been the result of an artist ‘bearing ones soul’ and the fear of putting that on the line for public scrutiny. This fear of failure, lack of self-belief, and some cases self-worth issues are all psychological concepts that may affect independent musicians being motivated to ‘sell’ their works and in some cases continue their creative practice. As Cave (2000) puts it, “drive and self confidence may matter as much as talent” (p. 35). The issue of a lack of motivation to self-promote may also be contributing to the over dependency of independent musicians to rely on a record deal to achieve success.
According to the IFPI (2012):

The majority of artists still aspire to be signed by a major or independent record company. Both research and a multitude of anecdotal evidence support this. A 2011 survey of unsigned artists in the US by ReverbNation and Digital Music News found that three-quarters (75%) wanted to sign to a record label. The most cited factors for wanting to be signed included promotional support (76%), tour support (46%) and payment of an advance (35%). (p. 1)

From this we see that the need for promotion is the main factor motivating artists to sign record deals. Throsby (2010) has also identified in his research into Australian artist careers that “many artists need better business skills” (p. 20), and many artists do not have the time, motivation or skill to promote their own work effectively. The report also points out that three-quarters of artists involved in the research state that they are themselves the most active promoter of themselves however most artists desire to spend more time on their creative work practice (p.61).

It is proposed that the lack of marketing skills as well as issues in motivation for independent musicians to sell their own music may be contributing to the gap between those musicians who have music as a primary career verses the total number of musicians and songwriters who desire it as their primary career.

_The key research questions raised from this issue are:_

- How can independent musicians become more motivated to put more effort into marketing their work and develop viable careers?

- How can independent musicians learn more about music marketing and increase their knowledge of marketing strategy in a way that they can understand?
3.4.2 **Issue 2: Becoming ‘market ready’ without development support.**

From a corporate perspective, the modern music industries no longer support the business model of a record label developing an artist from the ground up. Record companies are unwilling to invest money in raw talent that has not yet recorded or had some level of public success or proven track record. This is considered too risky in the face of a contracting market in terms of overall sales (IFPI, 2014b; Ogden et al., 2011; Simpson, 2006). Rather record companies and managers look to artists that are already able to demonstrate some or all of the following markers of independent music success including:

1. A professional, broadcast quality sound recording.
2. A demonstrable level of past sales of sound recordings.
3. A compelling artist image and story.
4. A professional online presence.
5. A demonstrable popularity on social media as evidenced by YouTube views, followers on Twitter and Instagram and 'likes' on Facebook as an example. Interaction in these spaces is even greater social currency.
6. A demonstrable live music following.
7. A professional live performance product.
8. A quality audio-visual presence on YouTube that may include branded music, video logs (Vlogs), fan-made video’s, professional live video’s.

Independent musicians looking to surround themselves with a professional music industry team or record company need to fulfil some or all of the above requirements to secure a contract or serious industry support. Cave (2000) states that artists “need managerial services in the early steps of professional development, yet their current earnings are modest and their small chances of ultimate success complicate engaging a manager whose compensation must come from low-probability future earnings” (p. 35).
Specifically they need to understand marketing processes and in some ways duplicate the activities of a manager or record label in order to be considered ‘ready’ for signing to these groups. The responsibility for the independent musician striving to be commercially successful therefore requires them to shift seamlessly between the role of a creative artist, recording engineer, manager, producer, record label, web designer music video maker, graphic artist and marketer to name a few. A self-managed artist must develop a strong image or artistic persona, which may be difficult without some objectivity and/or confidence. In record labels, stylists, graphic artists, publicists and A & R people all contribute valuable insights into developing the artist image and associated ‘story’.

“Image is as essential for major artists as it is to new or emerging talent since it relates directly to the target market and the need to both match expectations and provide a difference” (Anderton et al, p.104). Negus (1992) also suggests that a concise image can represent an artist’s ‘entire identity and music’ and articulate the uniqueness’s of an artist (p.72).

Independent musicians often associate the concept of marketing with promotion only and can overlook other marketing principles such as market research, product development, packaging, branding, pricing and distribution strategies and also monitoring and evaluation strategies such as ‘Facebook Insights’ and ‘Google analytics’. Much of the DIY independent music literature available is usually focused on promotion (Baker, 2005; Nevue, 2011; Spellman, 2000). This can come at the detriment of other very important marketing components such as product development and the role of market research in guiding the whole process.

In contrast independent musicians themselves can also spend too much attention and resources to product development and overlook the bigger marketing process leading to a form of marketing myopia which is product based but has little concerns for other consumer and market needs (Levitt, 1960). As stated earlier, an ISS adopting a sound marketing approach needs sensitivity to current music industry trends, consumer needs,
technological changes etc., and ideas for contemporary promotional campaigns ideally before the process begins. As discussed earlier, new marketing approaches explore leveraging promotional opportunities well before music production takes place. This product focus on the side of independent musicians may be partly related to the concept of satisfactions gained from ‘consuming’ their own creative output. Hirschman (1983) raise this issue of the artist being the primary consumer, and Fillis (2006) suggests that the value artists gain in creating the work may outweigh the financial returns gained from a third party or at least affect the motivation to pursue these gains.

The key research questions raised from this issue are:

- How can the independent musician perform the artist and repertoire (A & R) function of a record label (which is focused on balancing artistic and creative needs with commercial outcomes) and develop objective processes of quality control in songwriting and production that can increase potential for career advancement?
- How does an independent musician develop an artist brand, online presence and fan-base in the absence of record company support?
- How does an independent musician adjust to the different roles and skills sets required of them in the digital age?

3.4.3 Issue 3: Traditional marketing gives way to new digital marketing approaches requiring new skills.

Previously this exegesis commented on how the traditional approaches of music marketing that relied heavily on mass media, advertising and the influence of major record labels are starting to become outdated. A new approach is emerging that takes advantage of the social and technological revolution characterizing the digital and mobile age.
In relation to the skills independent artists need in the digital age, Throsby (2010) states that “sixty percent of all artists believe new technologies are likely, or very likely, to improve their income” (p. 20). It is widely known that the Internet and its related technologies hold a tremendous opportunity for independent artists to get their work out to the marketplace.

The key research questions raised from this issue are:

- What are the new marketing opportunities presented by the digital age applicable to independent musicians?
- How can independent musicians identify and utilize opportunities in the digital age to engage in more efficient and effective marketing practices?

3.4.4 Issue 4: Lack of academic research into independent music marketing and new product development in the music industries

As stated in Chapter 2 there has been little academic research into contemporary independent music marketing practice and the role of product development in the music industries (Anderton et al., 2013; O'Reilly et al., 2013). Furthermore, very little has been written about the interrelationship between the creative practice of songwriting and production and marketing specifically (Caves, 2000). Fillis (2006) suggests that traditional marketing tools have been developed without proper consideration of the nuances associated with the marketing of arts and music. The process of creating a recorded music work is complex and subject to many influences leading to the final product.

The key research questions raised from this issue are:

- What is the process of product development as it relates to an independent musician?
- What are the key influences on this process and how do they affect the decisions
being made?

- How can theoretical marketing principles be applied to the development of an independent musician’s career?

Through this practice–based methodology I am hoping to gain perspective on these issues and address the questions in my conclusions. The next Chapter directly focuses on my recording project specifically and the key influences informing it as well as key planning considerations for an album release.
Chapter 4 - Acknowledging influences on independent music production and marketing

This Chapter acknowledges the influences on my album music production: A Horse Called Freedom (HCF) and draws more specifically on autoethnographic reflections. A wide range of influences shape both contemporary music and independent music marketing practice, and these are important to identify now to situate this research. This discussion is designed to offer reflective insight into the influences on my own decision making process. It is hoped that this may shed light for other practitioners considering the role of influence on their creative work as well as approaches to marketing.

Hamilton and Jaaniste (2009) emphasise the role of practical contextualisation that situates the creative practice in relation to its broader field of practice and positions it in relation to the broader cultural world. Some of the influences that will be discussed have consciously informed my creative process however many act as unconscious influences operating in the ‘background’ informing and guiding the process also. Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of personality was built on the premise that the unconscious drives much behaviour (Schiffman, O’Cass, Paladino, & Carlson, 2014). Noy (2010) states that in creativity, conscious and unconscious capacities are intermingled. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988) presents a systems model approach to creativity argues that a confluence of factors drives the creative process and argues that it is not a process that is solely individually based. P. McIntyre (2008) further highlights that the system consists of a domain of knowledge (in this case song-writing and music production), a field or social organization that understands that knowledge (the music industries and society as a whole) and an individual that makes changes to the domain (in this case myself and collaborators).
It is beyond the scope of this exegesis to offer a complete literature review of creativity and influences on creative practice, rather it is my intention to offer a series of practice-based reflections on external and internal influences on an ISS within the current digital music industries model.

The following list identifies broad areas of influence affecting the creative practice of music and independent music marketing and each component will now be discussed in more detail. That is:

- Music and Song-writing influences
- Music Production influences
- Technology influences
- Social influences
- Cultural influences
- Economic influences
- Political influences
- Legal influences
- Commercial influences
- Personal Influences

4.1 **Musical and Songwriting influences**

The creative practice of songwriting focuses on the artistic expression embodied by musical composition and/or lyrics. The raw compositions developed in my practice are usually done with an acoustic guitar, my main musical instrument for writing and performance.

Early music influences included listening to a lot of AM radio in regional Australia throughout the 1970s and 1980s and later metropolitan FM radio in the 1990s. This formed the basis of my initial music exposure. The HCF album displays a traditional
approach to songwriting, a form reflective of classic verse-chorus-middle eight pop songs (Webb, 1999, p. 122). I was also exposed to related pop music imagery via the iconic music television show of ‘Countdown’. This seminal Australian music show introduced me to the artist identities behind the music I had been listening to on radio and connected the roles of an artist brand and image to an artist’s music.

My parents were not musicians but their music listening tastes had a significant affect on me as a child growing up. Early recollections include my father educating me on the Beach Boys (‘Surfer girl’) and its related sub-culture. This influenced my love of harmonies, a key production characteristic of HCF. Vocal harmonies were also a feature of the Swedish band ABBA, a favourite of my mother’s. I also remember being exposed to country pop singer Glenn Campbell and crooners Johnny Mathis, Engelbert Humperdinck and Julio Iglesias. On reflection I recall the love of rich string arrangements in this music, which later became a focus of mine on my first rock album Wingspan discussed in music production influences.

Other family influences include my uncle who educated me on the British invasion (amongst other acts) with bands such as The Animals, The Kinks, Herman’s Hermits, as well as well-known rock and pop artists such as The Doors, David Bowie and later The Cars. He was very passionate about pop culture and the role of music and artists in reflecting and shaping fashion trends of each era. He shared with me insights ‘behind’ the music and culture that I had previously not considered.

Peer group influences also played a role more significantly in high school with some of the following bands featuring in my teenage years: U2, Talking Heads, Spy Vs Spy, Midnight Oil, Bob Marley, The Smiths. Another significant musical influence was when I travelled to the USA in 1990 and visited New Orleans. I was very struck by the emotional and musical authenticity of the Afro-American people and blues music.
In terms of lyrics and vocal expression I also became captivated by the baritone voice of Jim Morrison (singer of The Doors) who has been an influence for many years especially for the vocal presence he projects but also in terms of his lyrical approach. His poetic approach to lyric writing and use of abstract images and metaphors has affected my own lyric writing. Some song writing authors such as Citron (2008) seem more supportive of story telling lyric approaches stating “the clearer your concept, the more professional your song” (p. 1). I was drawn however, to more personal and abstract lyrics. Other genres of electronic dance music, alternative music and experimental music are also less reliant on the story telling format.

Lyrically I tend to be very unconscious in the way I write, and the HCF album reflects more of an emotional journey focusing on personal development and transformation that can arise through hardship and loss. As Bob Dylan states, the songwriting process relies upon “the unconscious stuff that comes from you and the inner workings of your mind” (Zollo & King, 2003, p. 323). They are less story based in the classic sense however it is my intention that the listeners can place themselves inside the song and using imagery they can articulate meaning from their own emotions (Frith & Horne, 1987). As the experiential backgrounds of every listener will be different, it is difficult to gauge the true impact of this approach and necessitates the use of peer and industry feedback to assess the album critically (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 47).

My formal music practice began in my last year studying a Marketing degree at University. A student sold me his guitar and another student began showing me basic chords. I learned guitar via learning songs that I wanted to sing. Both skills were developed together. The power of learning this way is demonstrated by the success of ex-Nirvana drummer and now established songwriter in his own right David Grohl who says, “My musical foundation was the Beatles. Everything I know about playing guitar, and song structure, composition. All of it. It all started with the Beatles” (Grohl, 2013).
My music and songwriting draws little from formal music theory training. I did not practice an instrument as a child, although I did partake in singing the pop songs of the day for enjoyment like many others. I was exposed to limited music lessons at high school (which were compulsory) and even after I began as a singer-songwriter at the age of 21, I only had a handful of guitar, vocal and harmonica lessons in a one-on-one tutorial environment. I have never been able to read music notation. In one sense this is ‘freeing’ as I feel less constrained by mental evaluation of sounds, song structures and sonic textures and more focused on feeling them. My approach in a sense is less analytical and similar to Neil Young (2012) who when discussing developing new song ideas says: “Now is not the time for interrogation or analysis. Now is the time to get to know the song, not change it before you even know it. It’s like a wild animal, a living thing. Be careful not to scare it away” (p. 157). Paul McCartney also states that “the theory takes the fun out of music for me” and that his subconscious exposure to music both classical and contemporary gave him a highly developed appreciation of melody and harmony (FM, 2014).

Lebler (2005) believes popular musicians acquire abilities to make music through “immersion in popular music culture, a learning by osmosis” (p. 1). He also shares that replicating sounds and styles from artists that inspire the singer-songwriter, as well as peer assessment are other methods to learn about music (p. 2). This echoes my own reflections on how I have learned the art of song-writing and music production and in latter years I have been very inspired by the singer-songwriting and production approaches of Damien Rice, Neil Young, Ryan Adams and Ray LaMontagne.

This lack of formal training has resulted in difficulties, particularly when collaborating with well-trained peers. One of America’s greatest songwriters Jimmy Webb said in his book Tunesmith: “it is clear that even a basic musical knowledge, particularly of chordal theory and notation goes a long way in the songwriting racket” (p. 16). Artist Trent
Reznor also acknowledges the usefulness of knowing music theory when song-writing but more subconsciously:

I practiced long and hard and learned how to play an instrument. It provided me a foundation but when I’m writing music rarely do I sit down and think that this should resolve to that suspended chord or whatever. I never think of that but subconsciously I know I do. I like having that foundation in there. I know it’s a very un-punk rock thing to say. (Grohl, 2013)

Despite this lack of formal training I have still absorbed melodies, structures, sounds, singers and observed musicians carefully and my own work is a synthesis of this learning. Jones (2006) refers to this accumulated knowledge of what works or doesn’t work in other songs as ‘embedded taste’ which intuitively guides a songwriter and ‘while the new song may be unrecognizable from the songs that helped shape it, the interpretative critical perception of the songwriter will have been influential’ (Anderton et al., p 50). McIntyre (2008) describes that “a songwriter undergoes a long process of inculcation or immersion in the knowledge developing a feel for it, a sense of how it operates” (p.42).

In reflection of these musical and song-writing influences I would like to conclude the following:

- I am a singer songwriter with little formal musical training. This is not an unusual characteristic in popular music. My key learning tools have been via osmosis, critical listening, replication and mimicking inspirational artists and peer based interaction.

- A lack of musical training has led to a strong emotive approach to song writing based on emotional responses to chords and the images evoked in my
imagination. This style is ‘confessional’ as the lyrics on some level reflect my inner experience (Brackett, 1995). Writing from, what the blues artists call ‘the soul’ or ‘heart’ as opposed to thinking too much can lead to a stronger emotional connection with the song and hopefully this translates to the audience.

• Playing music and songwriting in particular has transformative qualities for the artist and can offer a form of catharsis whereby the songwriter uses songs to make sense of what has happened in their lives. An independent musician must be very careful here not to be too overwhelmed by emotional attachment that may impact on good commercial decision-making.

• This lack of formal music training leading to a musical practice based on trial and error and genre exploration may lead to a perception that my creative output is unfocused or too eclectic. If the music is hard to place squarely in a genre, this can lead to difficulties in ‘positioning’ the music to a market place and target audience. Radio especially, is heavily dependent on music classification as a means to matching songs to its selected formats.

The song-writing genre’s that most influenced me initially were pop, rock, blues and reggae and later singer-songwriter, folk and alternative country. These latter influences were more significant in shaping HCF however the album exhibits strong characters of pop and rock (especially in terms of arrangements) and blues (see Tears For the Road in Appendix 1 - Album). Breaking this down further key musical influences can be summarised:

**Rock influences:** Jeff martín /The Tea Party, U2, Doors, Pearl jam, Led Zeppelin
**Pop Influences:** Radio /Top 40
**Country influence:** Eagles, Ryan Adams, Neil Young
**Folk rock Influences:** America, Cat Stevens, Damien Rice, Ray La Montagne, Pete Murray
**Reggae:** Bob Marley
**Blues:** Early Chess recording artists - various
4.2 **Music Production influences**

Music production is a keen interest of mine largely driven by the desire of producing low budget sound recordings myself as an ISS. Being aware that returning on investment into music recordings is challenging and risky I began to develop the skills necessary in music production such as organising studio sessions, hiring session musicians and engineers, producing performances, arranging music and so on. Simpson (2006) emphasises the importance of the producer who is central to the process of record production and often responsible for hiring key personnel, studios, equipment, and to obtain all necessary legal approvals (p. 454).

Similar to the musical and songwriting influences my learning has stemmed from a combination of osmosis, observation, critical listening, mimicking inspirational artists, and peer-based interaction. I have also questioned some experienced music producers in my capacity coordinating a ‘role of producers’ unit as an educator at SAE Institute. Over the years I remember contemplating Phil Spector’s ‘wall of sound’, Rick Rubens’ non-technical intuitive approach, Damien Rice’s self production approach, The Tea Party and Jeff Martin’s creation of huge rock acoustic soundscapes, Brian Eno’s experimental approach and more.

Some key insights gained in my hands on learning prior to the HCF album include:

- The labour intensive process of analogue music production for an album using a 2-inch tape recording machine and real-time fader adjustments in mixing engaging the whole band. If one person didn’t fulfil their role we would have to do it all again.

- Artists have a choice in the use of click tracks in music production. On a previous album I elected to not use a click track to allow the music to have more of an
organic feel and to breathe more naturally rhythmically. This experience was positive and led me to make a similar choice for the HCF album. There is always a debate in the music production world between using a click track or not. B. Harris (2015) highlights both sides of the debate side saying that you may not use a click track because it can suck the life out of the music making it rigid and mechanical. The other side says that you should use a click track in order to get a tight and consistent sounding track that is also beneficial in terms of changing arrangements and editing.

- I realised that a more stripped back acoustic approach to production was easier to reproduce live as a solo artist and coincided with increased influences of folk rock and alt-country artists such as Damien Rice, Neil Young, Ryan Adams, and Ray La Montagne.

- I learned about matching the “emotional voice” of a song idea to the most appropriate sonic production “package” and genre. In an earlier project the song ideas selected were still more rooted in a rock feel however the production used was more stripped back and acoustic and I believe the final production was underdeveloped and uncommercial and did not match any genre very well. The idea of matching a song with an appropriate sound is commonly known amongst producers. (Massey, 2000, 2009).

- I also learned that recording as many tracks as possible live can increase the overall feel of a recording as well as reducing costs in studio time.

4.3 Technology influences

Digital technologies have already transformed or are in the process of transforming the entirety of the music industries: from their impacts on copyright and distribution to those upon composition, production,
As this quote attests, digital technologies are a huge influence on many levels in the music industries today. An analysis of the full impact of technology on the music industries is beyond the scope of this exegesis, however I will briefly review of some important technological influences on my practice.

**Technologies of production**

Anderton et al., (2013) point out the extent to which composition and production has been made more accessible with things like home recording, sampling, remixing and the production of music videos. This is largely due to the lowering of the barriers of entry to buy equipment and also online support to help develop associated skills in using the hardware and software.

This mixed method of production is becoming more common in the music industries (Anderton et al., 2013; Massey, 2009). My own digital audio workstation (DAW) used for the HCF album is relatively basic and includes: Laptop, Pro-tools, ‘M-box mini’ audio interface, a Rhodes valve microphone (NTK), SM Beta 58 condenser microphone and a range of acoustic guitars. This setup was used for many overdubs on the album. Despite its limitations in terms of expensive equipment the HCF album still garnered strong critical claim in relation to its audio production values, described by Rhythms magazine as “shimmering production and instrumentation” (see Appendix 7: Album reviews).

Technology also plays an important role in pre-production processes. Modern smart phones usually come equipped with a recording function for capturing song ideas anytime, anywhere. Ben Harper emphasises the urgency of capturing new ideas and advises to “get the idea down [because] it never comes back to you the way it comes the first time. I sing into my cell phone or whatever it takes” (Baltin, 2006). This mirrors the approach I take where for example, driving back from Brisbane, I heard the lyric of
‘Burnished Gold’ on the radio, and was instantly presented with a melody idea. I used a smart phone to capture the origins of the idea instantaneously.

Whilst there has been a trend towards creating innovative new product formats such as Bjork’s ‘App’ album (Robson, 2011) and Jack White’s latest interactive Vinyl release (Johnson, 2014), I chose cost effective audio production formats due to budgetary limitations and a reluctance to employ a gimmick in order to sell. I also utilised low cost digital technologies in filming the making of videos (largely by nature of using a student videographer).

In terms of merchandising, I created a limited run of promotional t-shirts available for the album launch. My research revealed a process called digital image printing or direct to garment printing which allowed me to produce a small run (50) of printed branded t-shirts at just $10/unit price.

Technologies of Marketing

Technology influence permeates through all aspects of the marketing process and in the following discussion I apply my practice-based experiences to summarise its influence:

**Market research** – I used a combination of email feeds, podcasts and secondary research on the Internet to stay abreast of industry trends.

**Promotion** – Specifically some of the key technologies engaged in my promotional approach were:

- *A Content Management System* (CMS) for website design and management – (Square-space.com) Effectively it is an online platform used to manage your website content (Chaffey & Smith, 2013).
• The use of *widgets* to assist in content development using a smart phone. Strauss (2014) defines a widget as a “mini-web application used to disseminate content or share content throughout the social web” (p. 477). I have a Twitter container on the website that acts as a ‘Latest News’ block which can be updated via smart phone. I have a Reverbnation show scheduler that can also be updated via phone. It also automatically updates that same widget on my Facebook music page. I also feed the latest Instagram updates onto my home page. Including this Web 2.0 social interactivity on a website adds to content currency and reflects the latest trends in social media (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; J. Strauss & Frost, 2014).

• The use of the Hootsuite app ([https://hootsuite.com/](https://hootsuite.com/)), which is a social media management system to manage status updates via the phone and for market research. Also the squarespace blog app allows me to blog on the smart phone which updates the website blog and sends that updated blog to the Tumblr blog. Mobile apps are popular technological tools that increase the mobility of managing an online presence (J. Strauss & Frost, 2014).

• Social media sites established (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr) and linked to the artist website. Also an established Bandpage profile also allows updated basic artist information (biography, photos shows) to a wide range of other social media /streaming sites such as Soundcloud, Spotify etc. It is widely known that an active social media presence is vital in developing the careers of independent musicians (Beekhuyzen et al., 2011; Donnelly, 2014; Nevue, 2011).

• Use of High tail /drop box to share files to various team members as well as media representatives (especially radio).
• Email marketing system – campaign monitor that allows me to collect email addresses on the mobile phone.

A more detailed discussion of why I selected these technologies and their role in independent music marketing are discussed in Chapter 7.

**Distribution and Pricing**

Opportunities abound for digital music distribution that range from selling direct from the artist website, to large music markets like ITunes via a digital music aggregator and offering music for free streaming consumption on social media platforms like Spotify, YouTube and Soundcloud. My own artist website has a built in shopping cart system and third-party sites like Bandcamp, also make music for sale with multiple formats options for end-users and allow the setting of flexible price points. This is a popular site to sell digital downloads of music and I utilised the embeddable widgets from this site to present music on my site. Finally, in terms of broadcasting, Nielsen (2012) Music 360 report shows there is also trend from a reliance on terrestrial radio as a music broadcaster to a mixed streaming listening behaviour.

**Technologies of communication between team members**

As an independent producer and band manager I relied heavily on group SMS messages to the band. Tools such as Google apps, shared drives, shared calendars and Facebook groups also offer an excellent means of staying connected with band members.

**4.4 Social influences**

Music is largely a socially orientated artform. While it may be listened to in solitude it is often discussed with others and shared on social media. From a social psychology point of view one could argue that music taste is a reflection of personality. In a sense music is closely linked to the concept of fashion. Cave (2000) compares music to a rank-order tournament in which the prize is social distinction (p. 176). Hargreaves and North (1997)
argue that for individual consumers, music serves the management of self-identity, interpersonal relationships and mood. In this context an ISS is both an individual consumer but also exposed to the acceptance and rejection of others. Critique (and praise) for my work has come from friends, family, peers, industry members and music fans. The opinions of these peers especially around my inner circle affect the music production; songwriting process and marketing approach both consciously and unconsciously.

In my creative music and independent music marketing practices I am constantly influenced by other opinions. Amabile (2012) states “that social and environmental factors seem to play a crucial role in creative performance” (p. 5). I am aware that I can filter how much of this influence to let in verses staying fixed on personal intuition and an individually driven creative focus. Because of the emotive nature of song writing and its inherent subjectivity, Caves (2000) sees the need for artists to actively seek objective feedback on their creative work to help get it to a commercial standard and ready for industry ‘gatekeepers’. This is a concept discussed throughout this exegesis and summarised in the final reflections.

Environmental concerns, reflected by society also influenced the packaging decisions. A minimalistic package was consciously chosen for my project because there has been a de-emphasis on the tangible product and growing societal concern for the environment.

4.5 Cultural influences

Hesmondhalgh (2007) suggests that creative and cultural industries have an influence on how we perceive and understand the world. Anderton (2013) supports this view of “music as culture and as a social force that allows for a deeper understanding of how musical meanings are created and communicated” (p.10). Therefore an ISS is a product of society and reflection of its culture. Cultural meaning pervades all aspects of musical and lyrical expression and “commercial success relies significantly on consumers’ extractions of cultural meanings from musical offerings” (O’Reilly et al., 2013, p. 118).
Culture also influences the marketing systems used by a country or region (Schiffman, 2014, p. 457).

The concept of subculture is evident around musical genres and has a significant impact on visual identity, fashion, font choice and so on. Schiffman (2014) defines a subculture as “a distinct cultural group that exists as an identifiable segment within a larger society” (p. 432). Classical music for example has the sub-cultural context or connection with the higher classes while, punk and blues music are reflective of lower working classes (Anderton et al., 2013; Frith & Horne, 1987).

In this project the influence of culture permeated the choice of lyrics most significantly with the use of American Indian and indigenous Australian imagery in songs like Burnished Gold and A Horse Called Freedom. This is discussed later with the concept of cultural appropriation in Chapter 6.

### 4.6 Economic influences

The business model of most of the major labels is built on signing artists who can provide an economic surplus to fund the investment made into all the artists signed to the labels roster. As an economic model the sound recording business is relatively high risk with high fixed costs for recording and promotion but low marginal costs for manufacturing. “From a record company’s perspective, it is preferable to make one album that sells a million copies than to make 100 albums that sell 10,000 copies each” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 6).

It is widely acknowledged that the music business is highly competitive and carries a high degree of commercial risk. From an independent musician’s perspective this requires a realistic evaluation of goals and objectives, as it is likely that many independent artists will never make a significant profit from their music business activities. This risk aspect
emphasises the need for careful marketing planning and budgeting to help raise the likelihood of commercial success.

Aside from economic capital gains however it should be acknowledged that the social and cultural capital generated from music activities are also important motivators for musicians and also important to key stakeholders such as governments who in Australia have set up various funding bodies such as the Australia Council for the Arts that recognise the non-commercial gains from music activities.

4.7 Political influences

O’Reilly et al., (2013) state that “music industries policy is generally incorporated within what is variously known as cultural or creative industries policy” and that these policies formalize and regulate the actions of, and relationships between, actors in the cultural sector, identifying which are to be governed by policy and which by market forces” (p.33). The political system informs the legal framework of music copyright and intellectual property through legislation. It also affects the economic climate.

In Australia, government-supported funding bodies such as the Australia Council for the Arts and Music NSW offer significant opportunities in terms of financial support for independent artists. Indirectly, the government also supports various advocacy bodies that can also support artists via grants, and education resources.

4.8 Legal influences

The central mechanism for revenue generation in the music industries is copyright, which is a form of intellectual property. It is important to draw the distinction between the sound recording copyright (which from an ISS perspective is the person who pays for the music production) and the song composition ‘work’ copyright which is owned by the songwriter(s). You need permission from all copyright holders on an album sound
recording because only they have “the exclusive right to copy, publish, perform, and communicate the work” (O'Hara & Beard, 2006, p. 11).

Payments made to collaborators, session musicians, engineers, studios, photographers, videographers and artists have been important in establishing copyright ownership in the HCF project. An ISS should be aware that if they don’t pay any of these collaborators there can be a threat of a copyright claim which can inhibit the negotiation of commercial transactions down the track. For example, a session musician not paid for a sound recording can claim part ownership of the sound recording. Since January 2005, the copyright in sound recordings is jointly owned between the person paying for the recording and the recording artists whose performance is captured on the recording (O'Hara & Beard, 2006, p. 12). Similar to the way a film production company approaches most of its contributors as fee for service contractors, within this creative project I made sure that I hired all members in a fee for service model to ensure I had control over the copyright in this project. The only exception to this was in the album artwork where I licensed this in a verbal contract off the artist and agreed to pay a royalty from t-shirt sales.

4.9 Commercial influences

The commercial influence is one of the strongest drives affecting the careers of independent musicians. There is tension that exists between the desire to realise creative visions free of resource, time and financial considerations and the old age requirement to ‘earn a living’. Many musicians in the pursuit of this creative satisfaction may invest time and money with little consideration for strategies to secure a financial return. “Art for art’s sake calls for proceeding with creative effort even at adverse personal economic cost” (Caves, 2000, p. 137). As discussed in Chapter 3 this creative product myopia can come at a cost when terms of considering the whole process. The practice of independent music marketing requires significant time and money investment to promote and distribute the creative product in the market place. While the independent musician may
be passionate about music, profit is usually the base motive of intermediaries in the music industries.

This is a good point to discuss key commercial influences by locating myself as an independent musician in terms of key business relationships in the industry. An overview of these relationships can be shown in Figure 2.

![Figure 2 Independent Musician Key Business Support Relationships](image)

A self-managed independent musician should be aware of how various business partners can support your career. The level of involvement each partner has in the development process is usually managed by the artist themselves if they are self-managed. As we engage different partners, it can increase the level of their influence on the process. Figure 2 highlights the multifaceted skill set required of an independent musician starting
out who may not have the funds to engage in this support and may not be able to attract the support of a manager, record label or publishing company.

Before commencing the project I self-reflect on my career to date and asked myself a number of questions to identify what I was trying to achieve with the project. It is important to acknowledge that in answering these questions I had significant time and budget restrictions that limited the range of choices available. As an ISS undertaking a music release these limitations in resources can influence the range of options considerably.

**What does the artist want to achieve?**

This question is important in terms of strategic planning. Beard (2006) states, “that nothing can be achieved without a sense of purpose. Without objectives, business plans become rudderless ships with little chance of successfully reaching a destination” (p. 128). From a commercial perspective my initial goal for this recording project was to gain market awareness and recognition of my music at a more significant level than where I was currently at, with a view of earning the attention of industry tastemakers and reviewers, media, industry players as well as my peers and the general public. I also wanted to focus on gaining significant community radio airplay, attention of festival bookers (and try to secure some select quality gigs) and also to license the recorded music.

**What is the creative vision? If recording with a band/engineer/producer, what level of creative control does the artist need?**

There are two answers to this question. Firstly I wanted to enjoy the process of creating, writing, recording and producing. Again this reflects the notion discussed earlier that I am the primary consumer of my creative output (Fillis, 2006). I felt inspired and was wary of too many external influences on my creative decision-making process. I believe that an artist interacts with a creative energy source outside themselves and process and respond
to this through their own filters. In a sense I need my mind to step aside and receive what is coming through to allow the purity and truth in the creativity to reveal itself rather than thinking my way to it. This is not unique to myself as many other artists share similar experiences (Beech, 2014; Zollo & King, 2003). For the HCF project I held the view to be careful about accepting too many other ‘ideas’ that may be ‘mental’ and as such resulted in me taking a lead role in creative control. As Simpson (2006) states in a generalized way “all artists want to have control of their artistic direction and output” (p.371).

How will the music be promoted on the live front? Who are those that will be involved? Will they be included in the recording process?

As a self-taught musician I have doubts over the quality of my song delivery in a solo live format. This is something I am working on in my creative practice but in recognizing this limitation I chose to frame this project around a band sound. Again knowing that a band will be key sales people in the future I wanted to get members that would commit to playing the album live down the track and wanted them included in the recording to give them more ownership and involvement which would translate into more enthusiastic performances in the live delivery.

What will be the product format? Will it be a single song, EP or album?

Traditionally in the music industries artists would record an album with a record company and release singles from it, leading up to the eventual distribution and promotion of the album itself. Commercially speaking this is a much bigger undertaking than releasing one song (single) or an EP (usually 4-5 songs). So the initial decision, because of budget constraints but also through the advice of industry mentors, was to record an EP. After the success of the first recording session where four tracks were tracked and recorded over a weekend, I felt the song writing, the sound and production approach had worked successfully providing impetus for the recording of an album. Some key factors affecting this choice were:
• I had the belief that albums carried more weight in terms of demanding more attention from media targets.

• I had also decided that a previous album lacked focus and felt more confident of creating a piece of work that was more focused and genre specific from a songwriting and production point of view.

• I felt I had enough quality songs, and a good team on board so I wanted to take advantage of these resources.

• I also had the view that I was creating an asset that would be valuable for future licensing so felt I could at least cover costs of production and promotion.

• Finally I acknowledge that artistically the concept of recording an album instead of an EP was more appealing.

In terms of the packaging format I decided to produce both a physical CD and digital version based on the current state of play. Artistically I liked the idea of also producing Vinyl due to buoyed sales globally of this format. The IFPI Digital Music Report 2014, saw an increase of vinyl sales of 75% however its important to note that this still only represents less than 2% of total music sales supporting this decision not to manufacture vinyl for commercial reasons.

What is the plan for promotion generally?

Again this consideration relates to budget. The more you invest into a recording project the more important it is to have a defined promotional plan to support the release. In summary if you don’t really plan to invest much money into the promotion of the release then this indicates you should limit the production costs significantly to avoid significant financial loss and having boxes of unsold stock.

What music genre to target?

An understanding of the differences between music genres is very important to the music marketing planning process. An artist exploring career opportunities in the commercial pop market for example, will need to adopt different strategies in terms of brand image, record production and radio promotion to that of a country or rock artist. Music genres
themselves have evolving online communities attached to them complete with their own sub-cultural nuances. They require specialised marketing approaches that reflect these differences.

The following decisions are significantly affected by the identification of genre for an artist:

- Choosing the right producer, studio, songs and musicians to help position the artist in the genre.
- Selecting appropriate performance venues that attract the right audience.
- Targeting the right radio stations / programs who play the music.
- Distribution – including the right tags to identify the music in searches.
- Online advertising – where to display banners and also ad-word campaigns which are based on keywords.
- Search engine optimisation strategies for the artist website.
- Brand identity and subsequent decisions on photo-shoots, website look and feel, general integrated marketing communications and positioning of the artist to the public.

Based on consumer and industry feedback, and the popularity of the first two EPs and the musical tastes already in the band, it was decided that the recording would be focused on the singer-songwriter / folk-rock / alternative country genres. This was also a reflection of the musical collaborators I was intending to employ whereby I had the intention to work to their existing musical strengths and styles. I also recognise that some musicians may be consciously working in a musical genre whilst others may be doing so unconsciously. Needless to say understanding the importance of identifying with musical genre(s) is important to an ISS in the development of the artist image and being effective with targeted promotional activities.
4.10 Personal influence

The final influence that needs acknowledging is that of personal influence. My emotions and mood affect my song writing process heavily. It also affects my motivation to engage in marketing activities especially when feeling introverted or self-conscious. As stated earlier my personal situation also demands that I be more accountable in my music business activities financially and in terms of the time spent away from the family. This motivated me in to be more efficient in terms of pre-production but also to engage in technology efficiencies that can save me time in marketing processes.

This Chapter has focused on some key internal and external influences that shape the music business environment and affected my own decision making process. It is not intended as a comprehensive treatment of all shaping forces however it has attempted to highlight some salient factors applicable to contemporary music and marketing practice and the planning behind the HCF album. All these influences inform my practice as an ISS, both on conscious and unconscious levels. It is an empowered perspective to bring influences into awareness in order to be more considered in terms of making sound commercial decisions.

The next Chapter outlines broad marketing planning principles and establishes the need for independent musicians to adopt a strategic approach when developing and releasing music products in the digital age.
Chapter 5 - Marketing planning for an independent album release: An overview

This Chapter provides an overview of the marketing planning process for an independent musician releasing an album in the digital age. This Chapter integrates literature based in the marketing discipline in an effort to frame the analysis and provides a broader perspective of the marketing planning process. In the discussion I reflect on my own practice and provide some examples to highlight key concepts. My own marketing planning process is elaborated upon in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.1 An Overview of the Independent Marketing Planning Process

As stated earlier, a planned approach to releasing music in the digital age increases the likelihood of project success for the ISS. Lathrop (2003) talks about the limitations of ‘flying blind’ with an ad hoc approach versus a planned marketing approach that shows:

Evidence that a specific group of people – people from a particular geographic region or age group, for example who have specific lifestyle preferences – are inclined to buy the kind of product being marketed. Before the release, the seller finds out as much as possible about the buying habits and tastes of the group, and packages the product to match those tastes. The seller then makes sure that the product is distributed to outlets that cater directly to those people, and advertises and publicises the product in media targeted to those buyers’. (Lathrop, 2003, p. 24)

This highlights a planned approach to independent music marketing and identifies some key components of commercial marketing plans. There are clear implications for their adoption in independent music marketing methodologies.
5.1.1 Situational Analysis

Commercial marketing planning involves gathering research on consumer preferences, lifestyles, habits and tastes as well industry and market trends. This is summarised in the widely known marketing and business principle theory called ‘the situational analysis’, which acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of a company in relation to marketing a product and also identifies key opportunities and threats that inform marketing strategies. One of the key tools representing this is the SWOT analysis (an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) which “is a practical way of cataloguing issues that will impact on your business” (M. Beard et al., 2006, p. 127).

As an example, I briefly outline my own SWOT analysis as it relates to my independent music business /company. The focus of the SWOT analysis is on the songwriting and sound recording aspect of my business activities. The opportunities and threats restate and summarise some of the findings gleaned in Chapter 3.

Opportunities

The use of readily available online market research tools

Key websites, email feeds, industry videos, podcasts etc., enable an independent musician to stay up to date with industry and market developments. Readily available website and social media analytical tools also help improve performance.

Product

The evolution of recorded music products has resulted in a hybrid selection of formats for sale based on consumer preference including: Song streaming services, digital song download services, compact discs, vinyl records, USB sticks, download cards at live concerts, associated merchandise etc. There are also new affordable short-run printing processes for merchandising and a lowering of costs of producing quality commercial recordings.
**Pricing**

Music industry pricing ranges from free and premium streaming options eg., Spotify, pay what you feel with a minimum price point eg., Bandcamp, as well as free download giveaways, and bundles that may include a collection of offerings. A competitive research process enabled me to set realistic price points for my own products available on my website ([www.cheynnemurphy.com](http://www.cheynnemurphy.com)). The other music retail shops have their own set pricing structures again based on competitive influences. (Kotler, 2012, p. 578)

**Distribution**

The evolution of affordable e-commerce solutions built into website content management systems allow artists’ to sell from their own website e.g., Squarespace. The availability of independent distribution services allow for digital downloads and the sale of physical products e.g. Band Camp. Independent musicians also have increased access to major digital distributors and streaming services via the selection of digital music distribution aggregators e.g., Symphonic distribution. The three examples above were all used to develop my distribution network.

**Promotion**

Key promotion opportunities can be summarised:

- Online and social media strategies have gained importance in promotional campaigns for ISSs’.
- Content management systems (CMS systems) have allowed skilled artists the ability to manage their own online presence as a key point of promotion.
- There are increasing opportunities in online advertising.
- Non-commercial community radio broadcasting is steadily growing in popularity.
- Publicity opportunities in online media such as digital magazine content and discussion forums.
• The use of incentives to gain contacts for direct to fan marketing and the use of technology such as email marketing systems to improve direct marketing and personal selling.

• Sales promotions to provide additional incentives at the point of sale.

• Growth in corporate /co-branded cross-promotional opportunities.

• Growth in music synchronisation in music, film, TV, advertising and video games.

These developments were incorporated into my own promotional planning process, which is summarised in the next Chapter. Whilst I didn’t use it, crowd funding as outlined in the trends in Chapter 3 is also an opportunity in the future for an ISS. I didn’t feel my social network was large enough or engaged enough to support a campaign successfully. I was also afraid of failing.

**Threats**

• The ISS exists within a highly competitive market for music.

• There is a reduced value of music due to the proliferation of piracy and free consumption options.

• There is minimal institutional or non-commercial financial support for musicians.

• Low royalty payments from streaming services.

• Declining album sales.

Some of the *internal strengths and weaknesses* and relevant to my own practice are summarised here:

**Strengths**

• I have a personal background in music marketing and experience in the digital marketing areas.

• I have a small, established fan base (300 verified email subscribers).
• I have the foundations of a social media network and website.
• I have previous radio airplay and a track record.
• I have my own commercial business structure to represent my music business.
• I own and control the composition and sound recording rights of most of my songs.

Weaknesses

• I have substantial budget limitations on my music business.
• I have significant personal time/family constraints that limit live promotion/touring.
• I have some skill deficits in the use of technology.
• I suffer from self-worth issues – ‘am I good enough’?
• I have skill limitations as a solo singer-guitarist and some anxiety in radio and TV performances.
• I have a limited social media fan-base. I also struggle to allocate sufficient resources in managing the social network.

This is just a brief example of my own ‘situation’ which offers a useful framework to develop strategic initiatives to minimise threats, maximise gains from the opportunities (by utilising strengths) and to develop strategies to minimise the weaknesses.

5.1.2 Marketing Objectives

The importance of marketing objectives to assist the marketing planning process cannot be underestimated. Baker (2005) says “when you just let things happen with your music career, you take the steering wheel of success out of your hands” (p. 10). Objectives are not an after thought, but a critical planning consideration based on commercial reality. They establish the parameters of the project. An independent musician needs to ask the question of how much time and financial resources are available for the project and develop suitable strategies in relation to the available resources. The objectives need to be
in-line with this investment commitment and should be specific and measurable, achievable and realistic to the budget available. They should also have a time range of when they will be achieved. Beard (2006) refers to this approach to setting objectives as the SMART principle, an acronym for each element of consideration (p. 129).

If the independent musician develops strategies to meet these goals and more importantly systematically implements those strategies then a project can be measured for its level of success.

As an example, my own project objectives were framed for the 16 month period from September 1, 2014 to December 31, 2015. The domestic market of Australia was the main focus however increased online promotion activities aim to expand awareness to international markets. Assessing the SWOT analysis I established the following objectives. These objectives are designed to be optimistic and realistic, contingent on the implementation of the marketing plan. A retrospective reflection post-release acknowledges that the lack of time allocated to implementation of marketing strategies is an important reason that objectives may not be met. Nonetheless they do provide a good motivation and sense of purpose and they guide the development of marketing strategies designed to meet these objectives.

- Perform at 5 major music festivals nationally
- Sell at least 500 albums, 500 digital downloads
- Get widespread national and international radio airplay (Community, ABC, American college radio, Internet radio)
- Release a digital double sided single, July 2014, and release the album nationally late August, 2014
- Perform quality local shows with the band 1-2/month
- Set up a music licensing website
- Secure 25 licensing agents globally in non-exclusive contracts
• Get music synchronised with masters in 20 placements internationally securing at least $20,000 for master and composition licenses

• Increase Facebook likes to 1000, YouTube views 20,000, Subscribers 250, Instagram followers 1000, Twitter Followers 1000

• Set up artist website and branded social media presence by August 2014

5.1.3 Market Segmentation and Target Marketing (s)

For an artist, the first level of segmentation can be divided into business to business (B2B) targets (such as Record and Publishing companies, Booking Agents, Mangers etc.) and end music consumers – business to consumers (B2C). There is an inherent relationship between the two groups. The B2B targets are highly interested in the level of success an ISS already has with the B2C market in determining their desire to work with you. This is often measure by social media popularity. Ace Antonio, Social Media Manager of Pacific Records says: “Social media is the key to showcasing your new work, exciting new fans, engaging with existing fans, and developing your brand. In 2015, if your work isn’t online, it doesn’t exist” (Distribution, 2015).

As an ISS I need to ask myself the question, is there an audience for my music?

The workability of a given commercial venture depends on customers:

Is there a group of people who will buy the product? If so, who are they? And how large is the group? The group of people identified as the probable customers for the record is the target audience. (Lathrop, 2003, p. 29)

The target audience for myself as an artist and the album HCF is diverse and wide because of the multiple genres represented (Folk-rock, singer-songwriter, Alt-country). Beard (2006) suggests that concentrating only on a single market can also be problematic in any case due to changing consumer tastes and the concept of ‘cross over appeal’
whereby artists may have appeal across multiple genres (p. 41). Discovering who my target audience is powerful as it allows me to tailor promotional messages, select appropriate packaging and descriptors for distribution, target advertising, reviewers and more. “You can avoid expending time, energy, and money on unknown consumers who are not interested in your music” (Lathrop, 2003, p. 41).

Three key examples based on my own practice that highlight the role of target marketing and its influence on strategic planning were:

1. When writing my media release, I was alerted by a colleague to be mindful of being too spiritual in its narrative and language. Even though I did identify a target audience of Generation X who had an interest in spirituality, I was also mindful of a more straight thinking rural /country audience (who the music would also appeal to) who may not relate to that vernacular so I toned that back on review to have broader appeal.

2. The guitarist suggested an alternative album title called ‘Spirit Always Knows’ based on my song lyrics but again this was rejected because of potential Christian connotations that may alienate some groups.

3. When designing my website I chose to leave the primary navigation tabs visible at all times rather than using a modern icon for menu that hides the tabs. I rationalised that because the majority of my audience were in a mature age bracket I wanted to make it simple and obvious. This is also supported in cross-generational analysis in technology behaviours (McCrindle & Beard, 2009).

For independent artists it is vital that they actively seek feedback on their music genre/style, music descriptions etc., from others to gain more perspective on their potential target audience(s). Lathrop (2003) says, “Ideally, the marketer should be able to define the audience precisely, in words, on paper” (p. 30). One of the music reviews in
Rhythms magazine supported my own target market analysis saying the album “should appeal to fans of the Powderfinger [Bernard Fanning] and Pete Murray school of song based rock” (Jones, 2015). I also received industry feedback from a colleague who highlighted the possible appeal of the music with young rural adults/families. Lastly I sent music into Reverbnation’s crowd review service to also collect additional data and descriptions of the music to help me get clearer on the appeal of the work. An initial review was 7.3 /10, which according to the service is a song ready for commercial broadcasting (Reverbnation, 2015).

As an example my own key target groups based on genre, and observation of similar artist’s audiences as well as my own at live gigs (especially observing who is purchasing product at markets) are summarised in the following target market profile.

**Target market Profile Summary (Business to consumer)**

**Demographics:**

- Age: 20-50 years.
- Generation X primarily.
- Sex: Men and women.
- Lifecycle: Young adults, Young Families, Baby-boomers.

**Psychographics:**

- Folk Rock / Alt Country music lovers.
- Environmentalists, surfers, spiritualists.
- Could also be rural based, lovers of singer songwriters (e.g., Pete Murray, Bernard Fanning), tapping into the sensitive side of Australian rural workers and their partners.
Geographics:

- Byron Bay/ Northern Rivers, Woodford/ Melhany, Bellingen, Shoalhaven (my own home region).
- Metropolitan cities (focus on Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne).
- Rural Australia – Gen Y /X.
- American College market, Berkley /California.

Behavioural:

- Late adopters to Facebook.
- Still buy CDs (Baby-boomers may even want Vinyl).
- Technological adaptors – not natives (McCrindle & Beard, 2009).

Music genre as discussed earlier, is also important in target marketing especially for media such as radio stations that cater to music styles in specific programs. Lathrop (2003) makes the point that acts sometimes object to being identified with a musical style however marketing is driven by this categorization (p. 37). The target market and music genre is then a key reference point when developing marketing communications that reflect a specific brand identity.

Key three (3) Genres identified for Cheynne Murphy and HCF Album:

1. Folk Rock
2. Alternative country
3. Singer-songwriter
5.1.4 Branding and positioning

Branding and positioning relates to how the artist hopes to be perceived by the aforementioned target market(s) and is shaped by genre driven communication styles and cues as well as artistic expression. Batlin (2006) shares Ben Harpers view on being authentic and passionate about your artistic vision.

It’s okay that it takes more than songwriting [to be an artist]. It’s okay to feel like you have something to say to the world. Don’t let anybody dissuade you from that. Don’t let anybody push you off that, because that’s yours. You own it, and you can take it to the world in your own way. (Baltin, 2006)

As this quote attests, music marketing goes beyond just the musical offering. An ISS developing their own brand has to introspect into what makes them different, not only musically but also from an attitudinal and image perspective. This section of the marketing process is pivotal for much of the strategic marketing development around an album release. Lathrop (2003) highlights the difference between immediate short-term sales and the establishment of a longer-term relationship between an artist and their fans. Ideally, customers will begin to view the artist as a brand that they can trust to provide music and experiences that they like, leading to brand loyalty (p. 27). A brand is much more than a logo or trademark. It is created through all the interactions consumers have with an artist. Interactions with the music and its packaging, marketing communications (visual, written and audio-visual) via the website, social media, and other forms, and the projected artist image combine to create a holistic brand identity. Consistency is important in developing a brand identity and a key marketing theory called integrated marketing communications (IMC) highlights this ‘one look, one feel, one voice’ approach in a promotional campaign which involves the careful integration of an artist’s many communication channels to deliver, a consistent and compelling message (Kotler, 2012,
Conflicting messages from different sources or promotional approaches can confuse the artist image and subconsciously build mistrust for fans.

As an example my own IMC approach is displayed now below in Figure 3.

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3**  An Integrated Marketing communications approach for an ISS

Positioning a music product relates to the idea that consumers organise products, services and companies into categories and ‘position’ them in their minds. “A products position is the complex set of perceptions, impressions and feelings that consumers have for the product compared with competing products” (Kotler, 2012, p. 202). A key aspect of marketing an artist is to discover what makes them different to standout from other artists offering similar products.

The process of positioning an artist is to standout from the competition in one or more of the following areas:

- The music and its packaging.
- Artist image and visual identity.
- Developing a compelling narrative /story that relates to the artist and music including establishing music genre, music descriptions, biography, media release i.e. written identity.
- Engaged and interactive social media presence.
- Delivering this in a consistent manner adhering to the concept of IMC mentioned previously.
An important component to positioning is the development of written positioning statements that highlight this point of difference and locate the musical offering for consumers and industry representatives. Examples of my own positioning statements are contained in Appendix 8. The album positioning statement summarises the differentiating aspects of the HCF album, established music genre and also artistic vision. In a sense it serves a similar purpose to a description card on a visual artwork displayed in a gallery. The consumer is prompted or guided in terms of making connections to the work and establishing its meaning (Oszajca, 2014).

5.1.5 Marketing mix

The marketing mix is the set of controllable marketing tools that a business blends to produce the response it wants in the target market (Kotler, 2012, p. 582). This incorporates key strategies around product development and packaging, promotion and integrated marketing communications, establishment of price points for each format and finally where the product is available for purchase and consumption i.e., distribution. The following is a brief discussion of my decisions relating to the marketing mix items, however it should be noted that a detailed discussion of new product development is presented in Chapter 6. Packaging, branding and promotional processes will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Product

The quality of your product is a very important focus of music marketing. Indeed having a professional recorded song (with great production, excellent songwriting technique and impassioned performances) that people (not just friends and family) are excited to tell others about and share is the holy grail of marketing because word of mouth drives your promotional efforts.
Kotler (2012) offers a useful three level model of viewing products in Figure 4, which can be applied to an ISS (p. 219).

**Figure 4  ‘Levels of a product’ theoretical model**

At its most basic level for artists is the benefit their recorded music and the associated brand identity is providing for the audience. This is known as the ‘core benefit’ and relates to more emotional and experiential responses /needs rather than strictly utilitarian ones. Benefits may relate also to self-expression and identification with symbolic dimensions of the music. Classical, jazz, opera, blues, etc., genres all have various lifestyle connotations related to the genre. In terms of my album based across the singer-songwriter, folk-rock and alt-country genres some of the perceived benefits would relate to the emotional connection to the stories of the album, connection to the visual imagery of country and American Indian themes, and perhaps a cathartic connection that may help listeners who are coming out of some difficult times.

The second product level deals with the actual product strategies:

- Selection of an album (10 tracks), artist name, album title, song titles, artwork and packaging.
- Choice of album packaging
As discussed in the opportunities section, based on market research I chose to have my product available in a mixed format exhibited below in Figures 5-8. A full discussion of these choices is presented in Chapter 6.

![Physical album package example](image1)

**Figure 5**  Physical album package example

![Digital download Card example](image2)

**Figure 6**  Digital download Card example

![Digital download on iTunes Example](image3)

**Figure 7**  Digital download on iTunes Example
Other actual products included:

**Merchandise** – T-shirt including direct digital image to shirt printing.

**Live show** – both band and solo, which are also a promotional tool for the album.

**Music Licensing** – availability of music to license on a Youlicensing licensing store.

The third product level is the associated ‘customer service’ of the product. Many artists are now using social media and crowd funding sites to engage fans themselves into the product development process hence enhancing the interactive artist fan experience. This early involvement and sense of ownership can also lead to a greater support and fan led promotion of the product they had a hand in creating. As a self-managed artist my own levels of interaction and customer service are represented as level three of my product. Additionally my team is also related to the overall product impression.

**Distribution and Pricing**

“Distribution refers to the set of people, organisations and places involved in providing access to your products and services”(M. Beard et al., 2006, p. 70). The distribution approach taken for HCF includes the following three channels:

**Channel 1:** Direct marketing channel “that has no intermediary levels” (Kotler, 2012, p. 338) via the artist website and social media
Channel 2: contains one intermediary – Bandcamp for digital distribution of files

Channel 3: includes two intermediaries – digital aggregation service Symphonic distribution who then distributes to an end retailer (downloads and streaming).

In terms of Channel 1, I had to make decisions related to postage materials, which included a protective wrap and a C5 envelope to keep mailing costs at a minimum ($1.40 per unit). I also needed to include a shipping amount. Finally I also need to consider my price point in each outlet and for each format so there is some degree of parity. A lack of parity may confuse consumers.

The timing of distribution and the associated promotion also needs mentioning. It is important to realise that a music release will only be ‘new’ for a short while. People generally like new things. New releases can end up on top of the pile not only physically eg., in a special tray in a radio station, but also as a digital list of ‘new releases’ on websites. Currency is important. When a date of release is established, the most intense roll out of promotional activities should be conducted at this time (Chertkow, 2012). Releasing just a single song off an EP or album allows this to be the ‘new’ thing and can allow you to have multiple waves of publicity for the release. It’s especially good for radio promotion as there is no guessing what song to play. Effectively a great song well promoted will attract attention and increase interest in the forthcoming EP or Album. It also gives you more chances of being new.

The Concept of Windowing

Windowing is the concept of “releasing content in different distribution channels in a phased schedule” (Digital, 2012). The concept offered by Oszajca (2014) is to offer your physical album and any exclusive bundles to the mailing list first to maximize their interest and to make them feel ‘special’ cultivating loyalty. In this phase, streaming of songs should be limited and rotated. This may be offered for two weeks only. Then make it available for digital download on iTunes for two weeks and finally have it available on
streaming services. This helps maximize physical sale revenues and minimizes the negative sales effects of streaming stated earlier. Unfortunately, it is difficult to control when digital music stores like iTunes, Napster, Rhapsody, and others actually make an album available. Even major bands have trouble with this timing (CD Baby, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the case study of successful independent artist Josh Garrells also supports the windowing concept. He says that despite having a successful album release “in the future I would hold off putting a new album on Spotify until a month or two after the release date” (H. McIntyre, 2015).

**Promotion**

There are many strategies that have been offered for promoting music in the digital age (Amedeo, 2009; Baker, 2005; M. Beard et al., 2006; Lathrop, 2003). The following is a list that will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 7. This gives a good overview in the context of marketing planning.

1. Live performance (incorporates personal selling).
2. Publicity (editorial / reviews/ interviews).
3. Radio airplay promotion (Terrestrial and Internet).
4. Online promotion(website, social media, traffic generating techniques).
5. Direct marketing (SMS, telephone, email marketing systems).
6. Personal selling (having an artist representative (or artist themselves) networking & liaising with industry and consumers generating product interest).
7. Traditional Advertising (print, radio primarily).
8. Sales promotions (incentives at the point of sale).
9. Merchandising (to use in sales promotions or products for sale outright).
10. Strategic partnerships /sponsorships (corporate /government/fans etc.).
12. Music Tradeshows (Budget permitting e.g., SXSW, Midem).
13. Music licensing (For TV, Film, Advertising, Video, which can result in cross-promotion for the album /song).

5.1.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

These take the form of various analytical tools designed to assess the effectiveness of the strategies adopted. This is especially relevant to online activities and the availability of data collection and analysis to measure the effectiveness of the different strategies employed.

Marketing a music product is a complex operation. It encompasses numerous activities, from product development to distribution to promotion – all of which work together to support a sales-generating whole, functioning like a well-oiled machine. But the machine, once assembled and turned on, can’t be left untended. It requires constant upgrading and modification. Promotional strategies may have to change. New distribution methods may have to be adopted. The musical approach may require adjustment. In other words, the music marketing program has to be monitored and managed to ensure its ongoing effectiveness. (Lathrop, 2003, p. 253)

A summary of my own analytical tools that were set up for this album release for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation are:

- The use of Square-space web analytics to measure website strategies.
- Reviewing of YouTube, Facebook and Sound Cloud Analytics for social media analysis.
- Use of an excel spreadsheet to monitor who music was sent to, comments and details of follow-ups monitoring sales processes.
• The use of an email marketing system to gauge how many people opened emails, what they clicked on etc., for direct marketing.
• Taking on board some of the feedback from consumers and reviewers for future product development.
• Use of aforementioned market research tools for continual quality control.

5.1.7 Implementation Plan

This section is focused on converting specific strategies into action steps outlining: What will be done? When it will be done? How it will be done? Who will do it?

Whilst a full discussion of the implementation and evaluation phase is not being presented in the report, in the final Chapter an important point is made that with no implementation strategy or action plan, the marketing plan is worthless. In my own practice this is a significant issue and this is outlined in Chapter 8 as one of the key reflections.

5.1.8 Budgeting

This outlines all the costs involved in the project, estimated revenues and potential profits. My project relied on the affordable method of budgeting, which is “set at the level the company can afford” (Kotler, 2012, p. 577). The relationship between budget and objectives was discussed earlier. The budget really creates the parameters for how extensive an ISS can pursue promotional strategies and outsourcing. In my case I was working with a low budget and my choices were limited. For example it influenced my decisions to produce my album in a limited time frame, hire a student team for the videos, and hire a graphic artist from the band.

5.2 The Independent Music Marketing Team

An ISS requires the support of strategic partners to accomplish marketing goals. Without them the ISS will be limited with what can be done. “It is difficult to go it alone in the
music industries. The more people you have on your side, the more likely you are to achieve your aims. The better your team, the more your chances increase” (Mark Beard & O'Hara, 2011, p. 53). The following discussion further elaborates on Figure 2 presented in the previous Chapter.

5.2.1 Product Development Partners

**Producer and engineer:** In terms of recorded music, a producer and sound engineer are key team members that can assist in the professional quality of the sound recording. In this sense they provide assistance in product development and production. In the HCF project I was an ISS ‘self-producing’ but I relied heavily on my engineer who produced most of the sounds and also added some sonic textures in mixing without direction. He was subsequently credited as co-producer.

**Musicians:** They can play an important role in terms of assisting in the development of the musical layering and arrangement of the songs. For an ISS that is pursuing a band sound as I have, these musicians play an important role in producing these elements. After the production and packaging process they also can play an important role in ‘selling’ the music via life performances and they can be more engaged if they have had a hand in shaping their own parts.

**Instrument and retail support:** Instruments and equipment providers are also key members for an ISS to have. They support the sonic inputs into the sound and an ISS needs to rely on the advice they provide. In my project I have relied heavily on an old twelve string Maton guitar as an important component of the sound. Increasingly I am relying on the Internet for information and supplies. I did seek support from colleagues and retail sales staff in informing decisions setting up my home studio.

**A & R support:** From a marketing perspective this role should provide the ISS with a level of objectivity on their songs and music. In a record label this role is about linking
the creative output to the marketplace and in a sense shaping the product development for commercial outcomes. I utilised a songwriting partner of many years, some industry mentors, as well as the band and my partner to help in song selection and arrangement.

5.2.2 Promotional Development Partners

**Booking Agent /venue bookers:** Live touring support of the album is one of the most important promotional tools. Relationships with venues and festivals who can book the ISS direct, and as their reputation gathers strength, a booking agent that can represent the ISS in the live market formally allow the ISS more time to focus on performance. In my situation I am my own booking agent.

**Promotional support:** A graphic designer can help develop branded promotional materials. A ‘radio pluggter’ can be useful to promote to larger radio stations but again budget limitations prevented me in hiring this partner. Publicists, videographers, printers etc. are all important roles that can be outsourced or their tasks performed by the ISS skills permitting.

5.2.3 Other Commercial Partners

**Manager:** To coordinate the release if available and willing.

**Accountant & lawyer:** To provide financial and legal advice.

**Music support services:** (Collection agencies, such as Music NSW, Arts Northern Rivers, Competitions, Conferences) To collect money, offer grants and industry information.

**Music licensing agent /publisher:** to develop licensing opportunities or assist in 'self-publishing’.

**Record label support:** May not be available but certainly in such a high-risk venture an ISS should remain open to the additional support a label can give. Smaller labels often pool resources with artists’ and develop business contracts that reflect this.

**Merchandising support** – in this age of intangibility merchandise represents a new opportunity to monetise popularity gained from recorded music product giveaways.
In summary, marketing decisions highlight the need for the ISS to identify his/her strengths and what they may be capable of in terms of managing various tasks and those areas that require budgeting and outsourcing. Budget constraints may also limit the amount of choices available in terms of product development and promotion. The DIY term associated with independent music marketing can be viewed as problematic because releasing music in the digital age requires a sophisticated range of partnerships with a range of commercial and creative collaborators.
This next Chapter explores the decision-making process that occurs when producing and packaging an album for the digital age in the music industries. In an effort to frame this autoethnographic analysis I have drawn elements from the new product development (NPD) framework from marketing literature that “lays out a process for developing and introducing new products” (Kotler, 2012, p. 254). This model has been adapted and depicted in Figure 9.

The NPD model is useful for an independent musician because it embraces a strategic approach that considers both creative and marketing processes and can increase the likelihood of commercial success of the project. This is also supported in the work of Bilton and Leary (2002) who highlight that creative process should not be considered separate from management and marketing processes.
There is a two way interconnected arrow between idea generation and idea screening. This acknowledges the fluid nature of idea screening and idea generation where some ideas may be ‘screened’ to be positive to develop but may be discarded back into the pool of ideas for many reasons and influences. For example the band or artist changes their mind and rejects the song idea.

Between the stages of concept development/ testing and marketing and business analysis the interconnected arrow represents the influence of marketing and business considerations on what ideas are screened. For example an idea may be screened and concept developed but rejected because it may require too much money or time in terms of final production demands. It should also be noted that investment in terms of time and resources starts to increase as ideas are concept developed and tested, and then increase substantially during commercialisation (especially in terms of promotional investment).

Finally the interconnected arrow between test marketing and final product development recognises that an artist may have released a product on a small scale but feedback has suggested that the product be repackaged or mixed or mastered and so the product is modified for the next print. Additionally a label may end up getting involved and also suggest changes to the final product that leads back to final product development.

In terms of applying the NPD model to the arts, Crealey (2003) points out that “while it is clear that existing models are not perfectly suited to the arts, the stages or key issues that they embody do have relevance for new arts products” (p. 26). Part of the relevance of the NPD model is the idea that with careful planning and consideration of the market and prevailing business models, business owners can reduce the risk of investing in new products that may fail. Caves (2000), highlights the risk inherent in creative arts production: “there is great uncertainty about how consumers will value a newly produced creative product” (p. 2) and the “risk associated with any given creative product is high” (p. 3).
Figure 10 below presents a music industries application of the adapted NPD model in Figure 9 specifically as it related to my own process but it may also have applicability to the approaches adopted by independent musicians more broadly. It highlights the relationship between production processes and marketing processes.
To begin with, an artist collects and develops creative ideas and inspirations in a variety of ways and formats and for many reasons including personal enjoyment and consumption. This process is influenced by many external sources including the music they have listened to, peers, friends and family, mood, socio-cultural change and so on. An example of the role these influences play was outlined in the discussion in Chapter 4.

Eventually there may be a desire to ‘release’ a produced version of these ideas to a market place with artistic, commercial and career goals potentially motivating this step. This then coincides with a process of idea screening where the pool of ideas generated (both old and new ideas) are reduced to a single, EP or album as a point of focus for production. The trend of crowd funding or social media could play a role even in this screening phase as artists may ask for feedback on a recording concept and financial support by way of pre-sales of the product (or other incentives to possible crowd investors). As discussed previously modern marketing approaches can begin promotion in social media before the actual production process takes place. The marketing influence in Figure 10 on the left hand side can begin even at the idea generation phase and into screening whereby an artist may consider positive (or negative) reactions to ideas generated and presented on social media. There may also be blogging activities, social media status updates and video logging on YouTube as well, all contributing to ongoing promotional exposure for the artist. These marketing considerations are affecting the choices being made throughout the stages of production and may also be impacting on all the individual production choices that are outlined on the right hand side of Fig 10. For example a recording studio may be selected because it offers good filming locations suitable for developing promotional videos for a teaser campaign during the pre-release stages of the promotional campaign. A song structure may be developed to suit its promotion as a radio single and musicians may be chosen because they will be utilised as the live band used to promote the recording post-release. Songs may be mixed to suit a certain music genres’ sonic characteristics and so on. Also as discussed earlier investment also increases as more time is put into developing concepts, packaging final productions
and then promoting and distributing these. Eventually final product packages are released and commercialised.

A conclusion can be made that this model represents a complex set of interrelationships and psychological processes and highlights the new integrated approaches in music marketing in the digital age that accept the necessity for strategic marketing considerations throughout the pre-production and production processes as opposed to being an afterthought later on. The following discussion will now explore this dynamic process from my own practice-based perspective.

### 6.1 Pre-production Process

In this first section I outline my approach to the preparatory activities that occurred before the actual recording process. Pre-production is an extremely important phase from an ISS’s perspective because good preparation and planning in this phase can save money in terms of studio time, session musicians and can maximise the chance of producing a commercially viable album within budgetary limitations. Pre-production includes:

- Listening, dissecting and analysing demo recordings, making changes to song structures, lyrics and arrangements, creating and approving the recording budget, and sourcing, hiring and negotiating rates for studios, engineers and additional musicians or equipment that might be required.

  (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 66)

In emphasising the importance of pre-production, I recall a communication with an Australian studio manager Billy Fields who anecdotally shared information about the album recording process for an album by the nationally regarded jazz trumpeter and composer James Morrison. He said the band was so well rehearsed, prepared and musically competent that they recorded the album in only a day (B. Fields, personal
communication, March 1, 2001). In contrast, I ended up spending ten days to record my own rock album at the same studio.

I will now summarise the pre-production process for the album HCF beginning with the idea generation phase derived from the NPD model.

6.1.1 Idea Generation

According to the NPD model, idea generation refers to “the systematic search for new-product ideas” (Kotler, 2012, p. 258). As reflected in the last Chapter on influences it is important at the outset to emphasise the importance of external sources for idea generation. Anderton (2013) states that “most songwriters, like most listeners, have heard and responded to a vast number of songs, and as a consequence, those who write songs tend to have either consciously or subconsciously developed a critical awareness of some of the traditions of the practice”.

As a practicing songwriter of over twenty years I began the project with a loosely catalogued system of over two hundred unfinished song ideas in various forms and a number of ideas in development. As a writer I regard the creation of a commercial music ‘product’ as an opportunity to finalise some of these song ideas and provide a high quality professional sound recording that represents the song in a time and place. My song writing process is similar to that discussed by Anderton (2013) describing Guy Clarke (songs recorded by Johnny Cash, Rick Skaggs and Jimmy Buffet) as an example of a writer who is “happy to stockpile song ideas and build them line-by line whenever the mood strikes” (p. 53). I have some song ideas that I have been working on for over twenty years and keep revisiting some of these ideas periodically ‘when the mood strikes’, refining lyrics and chord progressions. I tend to commit to song finalisation when a commercial recording is taking place. This contrasts to other writers who “are reluctant to start a new composition before the last is finished” (p. 53).
My idea generation phase exhibited two main categories for consideration:

- Older ideas previously developed or explored in either a rough written or recorded format or songs from past releases.

- Newer ideas in progress recorded quickly on smart phone or memorised on guitar around the time of pre-production.

The strongest inspiration from this idea generation phase began with the latter category with a new song idea called ‘Burnished Gold’. This is described in my artist blog, published on the artist website and Tumblr (and available in Appendix 6) where I discuss the initial inspiration for conceptualising the HCF album:

> It is in essence a concept album that had its genesis upon listening to a poem being read out on ABC radio that had the striking visual lyric ‘burnished gold’. *(Murphy, 2014a)*

The original idea came as a melody whilst driving the car and I had no instrument to work on the idea. I notice that if I am developing a song idea without an instrument I am less likely to get caught up in old patterns and methods. This concurs with comments made by famous American songwriter from the 1940’s Jay Livingston who states, “When you’re at the piano, your hands follow old familiar patterns. If you’re away from the piano, you’re freer. Your mind goes anywhere you want. I’ve written better melodies that way” *(Zollo & King, 2003, p. 16)*. This may have influenced the unique rhythmic format of the song, which has two distinct time signatures (4/4 and 6/8). This song ‘Burnished Gold’ when complete and reviewed later was considered by independent reviewers to be one of the album’s strongest songs (see Appendix 7). I started thinking about which other songs would work well with this track marking an active phase of idea generation.
Within the preproduction process I considered remixing old previously published tracks or overdubbing elements on existing mixes in order to achieve a commercially satisfactory outcome with minimal investment. I had apprehensions about taking this approach, combining old and new recordings, thinking that it may result in the musical works included in the project to lack a ‘signature sound’ or creative vision. This is an example of a decision-making dynamic between commercial and artistic objectives. In this example, despite the obvious cost savings inherent in using older sound recordings the choice was made to pursue artistic goals. Such is the complexity of this kind of decision making in the arts, you could almost argue that this was also a good commercial choice based on the aforementioned concern of creating a cohesive recording sonically.

One of the keys to my idea generation process relates to an aspect of the brainstorming technique developed for advertising and also used in the NPD models, which focuses on the removal of judgement of what constitutes a good idea before it has had time to breathe. Edward de Bono (1995) concurs, stating: “Everyone knows that instant judgement is the enemy of creativity” (p. 12). In a sense I try and minimise critical mental process when generating ideas. This also relates to Edward De Bono’s six-hat theory of creative thinking presented in Figure 11.

**de Bono’s six thinking hat system…**

![Six Thinking Hats Image](image)

Figure 11  Six thinking hat system by Edward De Bono
The White, Yellow, Black and Blue Hats relate to my cognitive activities that operate in the background as I process new ideas. My red and green hats are less analytical, “responsible for non-verbal, timeless, pictorial and holistic information” (Schiffman et al., 2014, p. 19), and allow me to convert moods and feelings into images, lyrics and melody. I discuss this model in the next section in terms of strategies to avoid too much mental judgement.

To summarise, my process of idea generation clearly overlaps with the next phase of idea screening from the NPD model. The following section elaborates on my process for deciding which ideas I chose to record for the album.

6.1.1.1 Idea Screening, Concept development, Marketing and Business considerations

The NPD process in Figure 10 shows that as the song idea is developed the amount of investment financial or otherwise begins to increase. My own personal circumstances places substantial limitations of time and financial investment into music projects and thus I need to be time and resource efficient if I am to convert a professional hobby into a career. The first part of screening is subjective and based on my personal internal feelings during the song idea’s performance and initial consumption. I tend to select ideas based on the ones that are most inspiring to me after repeat performances or listening to playback. I have found in my musical practice that by recording a song idea quickly and listening back to it a day or so later gives me perspective on whether it is worthy of further consideration and development. In this pre-screening phase the songs may have very little production value. This internal screening (de Bono’s ‘Red Hat’; thinking based on intuition and feelings) also has commercial implications. As an ISS and live music performer I believe I am a salesman of the songs I create, so I wish to perform with a passion or authenticity that reflects the artistic goals of the music rather than trying to purely present musical works for commercial manufacture.
The second phase of idea screening involves selecting the specific musical works from those ideas generated and internally pre-selected for further demo treatment in my home studio. It relates to the NPD model stage of concept development and testing. Kotler (2012) draws the distinction between ideas and concepts stating that “a product idea is an idea for a possible product that the company can see itself offering to the market, whereas a product concept is a detailed version of the idea” (p. 262). Ideas for musical works need to be refined and developed because they will be judged by the listener and a low level of production may impact on how the idea is interpreted. It is a challenge to the ISS, accepting external influences on creativity, and accepting that the ideas of others may be contributing to my own subjective intuitive process.

In order to limit the judgmental (Black Hat) processes I used a process whereby I invite collaborators to the studio and record/capture their first creative contributions or reactions to the music. The rationale here is that I want to record the somewhat instinctual musical reactions of others to my music but only after I have spent considerable time individually crafting the song format. De Bono (1995) supports this idea that individuals are better at generating new ideas and directions but once the idea is born a group of creative practitioners may be better able to further develop the idea and take it in more directions than the originator. I value the input of collaborators and I encourage them to find their own musical voice within the song as well as offering any minor arrangement suggestions.

After the process of concept development I make an initial selection of ideas. When I am undecided on which ideas to screen and select for recording after concept development, I present those songs and ask my musical collaborators to select the song they think is the strongest and would more likely want to record. A very important part of the process occurs when considering the natural inspirations of each musician in the project. Through song /idea selection I was aiming to hopefully satisfy their own artistic goals and as a by-product also galvanise general support for the project. It was offered in earlier discussions
that the members of the band are important sales people for an ISS. Therefore social reactions to song ideas and opinions of what to record were held in high regard throughout this screening process. This is an example of an ISS’s own A & R process whereby there is a matching process of artistic inspiration with market desires (M. Beard et al., 2006; Simpson, 2006).

Other pre-production processes other than the musical aspect was the hiring of an engineer to provide audio recording assistance for the project. In making the choice of engineer I valued industry experience and track record and consider project budget implications. Artistically I wanted significant creative control of this activity and I chose an engineer with whom I had worked with before and found to be very supportive. Someone who could facilitate my creative control whilst being able to offer input if required. I booked a recording studio based on budget and also because the engineer was familiar with its operation.

In light of trends discussed in Chapter 3 concerning the importance of video content, I also wanted some video footage of the recording process. It is important to understand that from a strategic marketing point of view, music product development is just one component of the music marketing mix. Many independent artists allocate most of their budget on the product and only have limited funds available for its promotion. “Promotion should be the largest part of the indie artist budget and yet it is the most overlooked” (Dwinell, 2014). Caves (2000) further clarifies potential issues of this product ‘myopia’ as it relates to artists:

The musicians may value the achievement of some finesse of execution that will elude the typical concert goer, although it will be noticed by fellow music professionals. Hence, the artist may divert effort from aspects of the task that consumers will notice (thus affecting their willingness to pay) to those they will either notice or value. (p. 4)
In this sense an independent musician needs to be careful that they do not undervalue the importance of other components of a consumer's total entertainment experience. This is further supported by David Hesmondhalgh (2007) who points out that cultural industry production focuses on the stages of creation, production and marketing but rather than being a factory production line, these stages often overlap, interact and sometimes conflict. In relation to the music produced in this project I was mindful that when I began the album that I give importance to the development of promotional content with the product development process and hired a small film crew to help create the ‘Making of video(s)’ (see Appendix 4).

6.2 Production Process

The tracking of the album occurred in three studio sessions (over six days) and a number of hours over-dubbing using my own home digital audio work station (DAW) and self-engineering. All the mixing was done via computer in the engineer’s DAW over a number of weeks. An audio-visual insight into this process is available in the videos (See Appendix 4). The following is a summary of the process.

6.2.1 Recording process

Session 1:

[Songs recorded: ‘Back at The Start’, ‘Burnished Gold’, ‘So We Can See’, ‘In the End’]

The first recording session began with my already established band consisting of myself (vocals and acoustic guitar), and an established drummer and electric guitar player. I hadn’t secured a bass player a week out from this recording so I was contemplating the possibility of overdubbing this element after the sessions. Being mindful of budget I did have in mind to record live rhythmic tracks, so three days out from the first recording day, I secured a session bass player. He was hired specifically because he was an industry professional, he could play upright or standard electric bass and he also responded positively to the songs, again emphasising the role of social influence. It is important for me as a producer that I have players contributing with the right intention into the project.
In the ‘Making of’ interviews I discuss my approach to music production with a metaphor of cooking. Each musician and team member in the process is like an ingredient. I want quality ingredients, and part of my determination of quality is both musicianship but also the right feel and connection to the music. Carrying the metaphor further, I also need to anticipate how those ingredients will work together in terms of collaboration.

This recording session turned out successfully and is documented in Part 1 of the videos. We fully tracked all of the songs in two days ready for mixing. There were no additional studio overdubs in these songs. These were big days (10-12 hours). On the first day we tracked the rhythm elements (drums, bass, electric guitar) live with me playing acoustic guitar and singing guide vocals. We chose not to use a click track because whilst it can help musicians to “lock in to a solid and unchanging rhythm” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 68), it can potentially stifle natural human feel (B. Harris, 2015).

We also managed to successfully track all the lead guitars in this session. On the second day I recorded all the acoustic guitars, vocals, harmonies and percussion. This was a big challenge from me in terms of energy and focus. As an example of my artistic process, the original ‘demos’ of Burnished Gold and their development are available as an exhibit on the artist blog (https://cheynne-murphy.squarespace.com/blog/). It is an example of the link between pre-production and production processes.

**Session 2**


The creative success of the first recording session was not repeated in the second session. The original session bass player was unavailable. He was also not interested in being in a band to promote the album either. This was the main rationale to source a new bass player for the session that was interested in promoting the album. The new bass player is featured in the music video (Part 2: Making Of Video).
The session was similar to the first although we did rehearse only once at the bass player’s house and not in the studio and we also performed the songs in a live performance before the session. There were a few differences in this session:

- We had to overdub lead guitars at my home studio because we (myself and guitarist) were not satisfied with the takes in the studio from the lead guitarist.

- I was not completely satisfied with the lead vocal takes and redid vocals for ‘Tears For The Road’ and ‘Until it’s gone’. Some of this overdubbing can be seen in Part 3 of the Music video. In terms of vocals there is a sense of intimacy and comfort in creating at home that I feel was lost in the studio environment when I listened back to the vocals on the original demos for this session.

- I also recorded harmonica at home after an unsuccessful attempt to record it in day two of this session.

There was nothing especially different in approach with this session. But I just felt it didn’t have the intangible special qualities I was looking for. I recall anecdotally a quote from a very experienced producer Rob Feaster (whose credits include George Harrison, Sting, Joni Mitchell) who I witnessed giving a class to students as I recall he said “I am not interested in capturing just the right notes and in-tune singing. I am looking for that, but also something special. Something magic. If I can’t get that in a session, I’ll call a break and walk my dog” (R. Feaster, personal communication, April 1, 2009). These experiences made me think about the nature of creative performance. It can be like an intermittent signal. Some days it’s very strong and other days its not. Its important to not always push but allow for the signal to become clear.
Session 3:

[‘Must Start Moving’, ‘Firebird’, ‘Good Feelings’]

This session was very similar to session two with the use of my own DAW for overdubbing to capture the right feel for lead vocals and for layering backing vocals particularly. All of the guitar recordings in this session were included on the album with the exception of the track ‘Good Feelings’. I felt the lead guitar break in this song was not strong enough so I decided to overdub some of my own electric guitar parts recorded in my home studio. After a creative difference of opinion I decided to foster a positive relationship for the guitarist and let him mix the song as I knew he had issues with my guitars. That mix was shared with the other band members and received mixed reviews. They felt like it had ‘lost something’ and the bass player thought it wasn’t as rich as the first mix (M. Cernegoi, personal communication, September 1, 2013). The drummer thought it ‘had lost some of its edginess’ (M. Akehurst, personal communication, September 1, 2013). After overcoming my own reactions to the new mix, I heard a sense of sonic clarity in the new version. So a compromise was reached whereby I reconstructed elements from the first mix I had been working on, and built these back into the guitarist’s mix. The mixing process will now be further summarised.

6.2.2 Mixing

Once all the basic audio tracks are in place the music is ready for mixing which “is the process of finding a pleasing balance between each of the component parts in terms of their respective volumes, placement in the stereo field, and acoustic properties” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 71). The choice for ‘mixing in the box’ (MITB) was again driven partially by budget constraints but also efficiency.

With the advent of well-developed DAW’s, high-resolution audio and powerful computers, MITB has taken on a new reality. Whereas traditional mixes were done using only a hardware console, many of today’s engineers, composers, producers and artists now choose to bypass that method and keep all or most of it inside the computer (Tozzoli,
In mixing, when the engineer becomes reliant on the outboard equipment in a studio verses the ‘in-board’ plugins of a computer this obviously adds to the budget in terms of buying the necessary studio time for mixing. I also liked the idea of having less pressure on creating a mix, and having the ability to listen back after a few days particularly when establishing level subtleties such as harmonies, lead vocals, and lead guitar.

One key strategy I use when commenting on near complete mixes is the use of multiple devices that I am familiar with to gauge a mix’s readiness. I have had the same stereo speakers for over twenty years, and I also use the car stereo as well and occasionally headphones to get multiple perspectives on the sound of the mix. Many studios’ use ‘near field’ monitors to emulate typical listening, and “a good mix is frequently considered to be one that sounds good across a range of situations” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 72). I also like to A/B test this with other similar sounding commercially released mixes which is also a common practice in this stage (Anderton et al., 2013; Massey, 2000). In terms of other band members, I did present final mixes for comment and had some minimal input from them. Finally I also used an external ‘set of ears’ with a song-writing collaborator who offered some input on final mixes. This collaborative approach is a form of ‘test marketing’ according to the NPD model and again highlights the choice of an interconnecting arrow between final product development and test marketing.

In conclusion I believe that the MITB method is a suitable practice for independent music production because it has this ongoing quality control aspect and allows for a continual refinement of the creative product whilst still being affordable. It is also flexible in that it is much easier to recall mixes with identical effects settings at later dates if further modifications are required for other purposes. For example recently I needed an instrumental version of a song for licensing purposes and I had not created a mix for this
in the initial mixing process. The mixer was able to recall this on his DAW and at minimal cost produce a new instrumental mix.

6.2.3 Mastering

Mastering is the final part of the sound recording production process in which a final stereo mix is processed to balance the overall sound as well as establish volume levels suitable for distribution. Mastering engineers fine-tune completed stereo mixes using equalisation, limiting, compression, and other audio processing techniques. They also ensure sonic consistency across the entire album (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 73).

This job was outsourced to a local mastering engineer, again keeping in line with the societal marketing concept mentioned earlier. In this case the choice reflects buying ‘locally’ and is more community based. The co-producer, who had received positive word-of-mouth on the mastering engineer’s skills, also influenced this decision. This further validated the choice. Mastering is considered a specialist production skill and only myself and my engineer /co-producer had involvement with the process.

One factor in the mastering process is the concept of ‘loudness’. This relates to the overall sound pressure level and dynamic range of recorded music. The emergence of ‘loudness wars’ has placed new demands on mastering engineers to make recordings louder and punchier to stand out in iTunes libraries and sound louder than competitors music (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 75). This is another example of the way commercial considerations bleed into the creative process regarding the overall sound of the music. A number of mastered mixes for HCF were sent back to the mastering engineer to be increased in volume, in line with standard practice, but not necessarily to improve sonic quality.

Another insight was gained editing the track ‘Burnished Gold’ in mastering. It was edited and shortened so it was more suitable to commercial radio single lengths (commonly
placed between two to four minutes). We edited the song from 4:39 to a length of 3:39 by halving the lead instrumental break and using a quicker introduction. This was a decision that I made motivated by a commercial influence. In reflection, soon after this edit I had decided that this was my preferred choice from an artistic and creative perspective also.

Finally, the song order, and the length of gaps and fades, was done via email communication based purely on artistic preferences. The rationale for the song order followed from the lyrical concept discussed earlier and is available on the blog (See Appendix 6).

In conclusion this Chapter has explored the processes of producing a music product, the decision making process and the influence of marketing considerations on this process from an autoethnographic perspective. The next Chapter focuses more specifically on the marketing, business and commercialisation aspects of the NPD model for the sound recording. The discussion will begin with the rationale behind the packaging of the sound recording including the choice of the album title and associated artwork and branding concepts and will outline the marketing planning process undertaken.
Chapter 7 - Packaging, branding and promoting an album in the digital age: Outcome two

This Chapter reflects on the outcomes of my decision-making process in packaging a sound recording, developing an artist brand and associated promotional materials. This discussion firstly describes the packaging process for the album HCF and the relationship this has with the strategic marketing concepts of branding and positioning discussed earlier. Secondly I outline a specific process used to develop the branded promotional materials in the creative portfolio and how these are deployed in the development of a promotional plan.

7.1 Background to the brand concept

The creative portfolio produced in this project is part three of a trilogy of recordings titled the ‘Firesongs for the Soul series’, which connects the album to the previous EP’s released. I created this series to ‘brand’ a style of my music that was more acoustic and folk based. The intention was to create a ‘family’ brand; “the practice of marketing a line of company products under the same brand name” (Schiffman et al., 2014, p. 207). The different styles of music I produce would then become line extensions with different ‘title based’ series sub-branded for each music style released. For example, Firesongs For the Soul Series and other prospective working titles Sunshine Songs for the Soul Series (Pop) and Wild Horse Songs For the Soul Series (Rock). Using this rationale I can avoid having to create and maintain multiple online presences for different styles but instead produce different themes and even tabs on the website that represent each style. As the ‘Firesongs For the Soul’ series is the only part of this series of recordings that have been released, it is unclear if I will pursue this branded series strategy in the future.
As a creative concept the imagery evoked by the title Firesongs For the Soul is an imaginary space inclusive and welcoming to ‘gather around’. The imagery is linked to a press release excerpt included below:

Firesongs For The Soul represent that special union that occurs between people singing and sharing music around a campfire which is etched into Cheynne’s DNA from a history of camping and surfing up and down the East Coast of Australia. It is also a coming home to authenticity and truth….. sometimes talk around the fire will reveal deeper sharing between people. The fireplace can also be the central hearth of a community. (Murphy, 2009, p. 1)

The artwork included in the Firesongs For the Soul EP’s I and II (seen in Figure 12) featured a complimentary layout to this imagery.

![Example of family branding using stimulus generalisation](image)

**Figure 12** Example of family branding using stimulus generalisation

There is a commercial or marketing rationale for this sort of approach that is referred to as the theory of ‘stimulus generalisation’ (Schiffman et al., 2014, p. 690), a marketing technique whereby consumers who bought the first item, and see the second item with the same stimulus characteristics (in this case the artwork motifs) will consciously (or unconsciously) associate the products together. This helps alleviate confusion in the customers mind that the CD’s may feature very different music and encourages them to
buy the collection. This supports this family branding approach that “capitalises on the consumers ability to generalise favourable brand associations from one product to others” (p. 207).

7.2 HCF Artwork and Packaging

An album artwork concept sets up a strong visual theme and initial appeal for consumers. In a highly competitive environment like the music industries, the package can be influential in gaining consumer attention and even though from a marketing theory standpoint it is considered a product strategy (M. Beard et al., 2006; Kotler, 2012), it can also serve as an important promotional medium (Kotler, 2012, p. 226). Packaging is useful for “attracting consumer attention, suggesting the value of the product, and positioning it amid competition” (Lathrop, 2003, p. 46).

7.2.1 Choosing a designer

The first major decision I had in this process was thinking about an artwork concept and also a graphic artist. Initially I contacted a local visual artist and friend who lived nearby and I knew she had paintings of horses, specialised in American Indian themes as well as related jewellery. The fact that the artwork designer was not a professional graphic artist led me to engaging the services of a professional graphic designer who was also the guitarist of the band. This decision is mirrored by Lathrop (2003) who states, “You can save money by hiring your art-student friend to design the album cover. Or you can make sure you end up with a professional product by hiring an experienced pro” (p. 62).

When considering the debut album cover design I made a decision to differentiate the artwork from the previous EPs. This decision enabled more scope to use visual imagery that reflected the lyrical imagery of the album. The decision was also taken after I made a number of efforts to include motifs from previous artwork but the designer did not feel they worked with the new look. Following from this I decided to create a new template for the
debut album but keep some of the earlier motif’s on some of the online banner graphics as shown below in Figure 13.

![Home page Artist Website banner](image)

**Figure 13  Home page Artist Website banner**

### 7.2.2 The artwork imagery

Image wise the album artwork featured a mythological creature ‘A Horse Called Freedom’ reflecting one of the tracks with the same name. This set the tone for the visual aesthetics of the album branding. Essentially this artwork style reflected the title track and associated lyrical imagery more closely. This form of visionary art also marries well with the more abstract approach to song writing I discussed in song writing influences. This artwork was a graphic design synthesising some paintings from the artist originally hired. The eagle superimposed over the horse represents the freedom aspect of the title and an eagle motif was also used on the actual CD and inside sleeve.

From a commercial marketing perspective it is preferable for the imagery used in previous releases to ‘bind together’ the original branding concept with the new work. This can be seen in the image displayed above and is also exhibited within the first promotional media release for the project:

The groundwork had been laid for an album release which began with the song Burnished Gold after Cheynne heard the phrase in a poem on radio. As he recalls: “I had been working with a concept called
‘Firesongs For the Soul’ for my EP’s which focused on the fire as a source of healing, community gathering as well as a musical sharing, using acoustic instruments and harmonies. When I heard the Burnished Gold lyric it struck me visually. I saw embers and flames as well as the shades of gold a surfer sees through waves.” (Murphy, 2014b)

This original branding concept then evolved most significantly with the decision to change the visual identity of the earlier work leading to the development of the HCF visual identity.

Figure 14 HCF album front and back cover

Another key artwork decision was the choice to use a band photo on the back cover. The thinking here was to signal to music consumers that despite being a singer-songwriter, this album embodies a band sound. I had already received some commitment from members to support the album from a live perspective.

Observations from my own practice suggest that consumers viewing a live performance want to purchase a product representative of that performance. Given that I wanted to present the album as a band and was willing to book shows to this effect I felt that including this band orientated image was indicative of what was ‘inside’ the package. I also
thought this was a sign of respect to the collaborators. I did however consciously know that I was standing forward in the photograph to signify that I was still the main element in the product. This again highlights the complex dynamics operating between creative and artistic choices and commercial considerations.

I was also inspired to transfer the artwork theme into my artist image so I used the feather jewellery piece in the main photo. I also feature this interaction to get the hairpiece in Part 1 of the ‘Making of’ videos and use this image in all recording sessions as well as in the live presentation supporting the integrated marketing communications (IMC) concept discussed earlier.

7.2.3 The issue of cultural appropriation

It is important to acknowledge the use of American Indian symbology in the artwork choice and also image development. The term cultural appropriation refers to the taking from a culture, expressions, artefacts, history and ways of knowledge (Ziff & Rao, 1997, p. 1). It is controversial in its interpretation. Joshi (2014) states: “the big deal with cultural appropriation is when the new adoption is void of the significance that it was supposed to have—it strips the religious, historical and cultural context of something and makes it mass marketable. That’s pretty offensive”. As an artist I was ignorant to this concept and even though I have consciously borrowed American Indian cultural symbols I believe I have done it from an artistic, creatively inspired, point of view. That being said I want to acknowledge that this could be seen as tokenism and could be a real issue for some consumers and media representatives. Lanphier (2014) (Lanphier, 2014) offers a detailed discussion of this topic highlighting the commercialisation of American Indian cultural artefacts and the social media back lash for Christine Fallin who posted a photo on Instagram wearing a full headdress with a further provocation by including a caption ‘Appropriate Culturation’.
I made a creative choice to respectfully include imagery lyrics inspired by the wisdom of Native American and Aboriginal peoples. My media release also created an angle around a movie I watched with my father called a ‘Man Called Horse’ that presented the assimilation of a white westerner into an Apache tribe. Price (1973) argues that some of the images in this movie stereotype American Indian people. In a sense I tried to incorporate indigenous and modern western themes in the album however rather than using a complete headdress I only used a feather in my hair. Also I was making no political statement on indigenous culture in my lyrics. The inspiration of using this imagery is outlined in a detailed blog on the writing of the album and as found in the blog tab on the website (www.cheynnemurphy.com). At the writing of the exegesis I have not received any negative feedback to this effect but I am not discounting the idea that this may have caused some negativity form audience members.

7.2.4 Font choice

“The brand is the unique personality that identifies a product, service, person or place. Design gives us the visual instantiation of a brand. The selection of typefaces and the arrangement of them can be as important as the use of colour, images or abstract graphics in creating a brand” (Phinney, 2015). The selection of fonts for HCF, were a creative choice that aligned with the American folk imagery of the musical works combined within the already established graphic design elements.

7.2.5 Image choice for inside the CD

The photographs in the CD package continue the theme of the previous EP’s that feature key members for the production in the inside sleeve. As a solo artist I think it’s also important to publicly acknowledge creative contributors. I have created a tab on the artist website with links to information about all the creative artists involved in the project.
7.2.6 Artist name

The spelling of my artist name Cheynne Murphy differs from my legal spelling Shane Murphy. This decision has both a creative and commercial rationale. I decided to name myself Cheynne as an artist for personal reasons related to a lack of perceived parental support but also to differentiate myself. Whilst pronounced the same way, the unique spelling enables me to be at the top of an Internet search engine when using my name as keyword. This is defined as a ‘search engine optimisation’ (SEO) marketing consideration. SEO is known as the process of maximising the number of visitors to a website by ensuring the site links appear high on a search engine results page for appropriate keywords (J. Strauss & Frost, 2014, p. 474). It is an important aspect of findability for unknown independent artists for music consumers searching artist names or album titles.

Simpson (2006) also states that: “you must establish your own identity. Part of this task is to make sure that there aren’t other musicians using the name that you want to use” (p. 22). This is also important from a trademark perspective.

The spelling is similar to ‘Cheyenne’, which is an American Indian tribe. On one hand this works well with the overall creative concept. However, the spelling could work against the commercial success of the project due to potential cultural appropriation critiques that have been discussed earlier.

7.2.7 Album Title

Album titles now have new commercial considerations in the digital age. An album title can draw in undirected shopping traffic from consumers potentially searching keywords and finding a music album representing those same keywords. Again this is an example of SEO considerations. Those consumers may not have been consciously searching for music and may not be in the target audience for the style of music however this raises the exposure of the album and the possibility of impulse buying. At the very least there may
be some engagement with the music via a stream, free download or other action based conversion activity.

Despite this consideration, the album title in my practice was chosen more because of artistic influences. I may have been influenced by popular culture with a song by the band America called Horse with No-name I recalling listening to on radio in the 1970’s and also the movie I saw as a child called ‘A Man Called Horse’. I ended up using the widely accepted practice of selecting one of the songs on the album as the album title. It also worked well with the artwork imagery.

7.2.8 Album photography

I organised a professional photographer to create images to support the abstract cover imagery. Knowing that the music itself was moody and introspective, I wanted to reflect this in the graphic imagery of the album artwork. Again I was mindful of my appearance being consistent across promotional mediums to support the branding so I used the same image that I began with in the recording studio and that I would later use in live performance. A reflection at this stage was that I did do a photo-shoot without the band and without supplying music to the photographer prior to the shoot. It resulted in a photo-shoot that was more focused on ‘happy’ portrait shots and less introspective shots. In hindsight I would make sure that the photographer had at least a little exposure to the music and artwork concepts prior to the shoot so that the photos were more congruent with the album concept.

7.2.9 Physical package, information requirements and manufacturing

The graphic designer chose the actual physical format and the manufacturer, organising for a run of 500 copies. For commercial reasons I only chose the 500 copies to press because despite significant cost savings at 1000 copies, I didn’t want the risk of having unsold stock which had been my experience previously. Letang (2014) concurs saying “start out with a modest amount, and then get more after if there is a need” (Letang, 2014).
As mentioned before, I needed to release creative control to focus on other promotional tasks. Apart from the album credits and establishment of the sound recording copyright (which was published by my own label (CMI Records) and composition copyright which was owned by myself) we chose not to include additional lyrics /images /booklets etc., I made the decision based on earlier research that the emphasis of artist content is increasingly becoming intangible and digital in nature. Thus I decided to include lyrics and other associated traditional packaging elements in my artist blog as well as a PDF download of the lyrics in the music section. Also after discussing this with the designer we also rationalised that it was more environmentally sustainable (adhering to the social marketing concept again) and based on our own experience and observation of others, people usually transfer the music into a digital form and often discard the disc into storage.

7.2.10 Digital Packaging Requirements

Gracenote registration

If you’ve ever wondered how your CD player knows the album name and track info when you pop it in, it’s because of Gracenote MusicID (gracenote.com). This service scans the CD, and once they recognize it, pull down the track information. (Chertkow, 2012)

The independent artist needs to put the final manufactured disc into ITunes and in the information section title the CD, and each track and submit this to Gracenote. This enables any other customers who do the same step to see that it is ‘recognised’ and this data will then be attached to these files. This is important in terms of being correctly catalogued in consumer ITunes libraries.

Meta-tags

When audio went from analogue to digital, it became possible to label or encode audio files with more information than just the filename. The identifying information is called
‘metadata’ and is important to consider when offering music available for download. It ensures the file will be recognised when opened with the media library software (Soundideas, 2015). Wave files have no associated meta-data until the CD details are registered with Grace note, and even still this data will only show up within a managed software library.

I used software to create metatags of all my MP3’s that were generated. This enabled me to complete this task quickly. The key reasoning behind having meta-data to digitally package song files is so if the songs are downloaded via either a sale or for promotional purposes the songs are easily identified in music libraries’. This is further reinforced by Houlihan (2012) who states: “CDs don’t have the critical thing that music supervisors look for metadata contact information and songs details. Most music supervisors want MP3’s full of meta data including contact details and as much details on the song as possible” (MUBUTV, 2012).

**Codes**

The international standard recording codes (ISRC) is the international identification system for sound recordings and music video recordings. They are like a digital footprint that facilitates royalty payments and are also required for distribution. They can be applied for online and must be encoded for each track in the pre-master CD. A Universal Product Code (UPC) is also required to sell in retail outlets and signify a musical collection (ARIA, 2015).

### 7.3 Branded promotional material development and promotional planning

Developing a strong promotional campaign to gain attention in a given music marketplace involves the implementation of promotion strategies over a concentrated campaign period. Chertkow, R., & Feehan, j., (2012) discuss a timeline of activities and encourage the sharing of your artistic journey before the release date, suggesting to start the
promotion of your album even during writing and recording it as fans like being part of a creative process and social media can let them in on “your private artistic world” (p.3). Consumers exposed to these various communication ‘touch points’ gain awareness of the ISS and album and hopefully strengthen a level of purchase conviction, leading to an eventual sale from the ISS’s product line e.g., CD, download, live show etc. This process requires significant time, skill and financial investment to gain wide coverage and exposure for the artist, hence the traditional role of record companies in this business model.

Twelve broad music promotional strategies can be identified derived from a literature review (Amedeo, 2009; Baker, 2005; M. Beard et al., 2006; Kotler, 2012; Lathrop, 2003, 2013; Nevue, 2011). These are summarised in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15  The Promotional Mix For an ISS Releasing an Album
When developing the promotional mix an ISS must also create the necessary branded promotional materials to execute each strategy. Crucial here is the development of a visual identity especially in terms of image and connection to artwork, but also written identity (web content, biography, media kit and positioning statements) and an interactive identity via social media. An integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach as discussed in Chapter 6, is created by using a one look, one voice, one appeal that travels through all of these marketing communications. I will now discuss the development of the branded promotional materials with an integrated examination of promotional planning strategies for an ISS.

7.3.1 Online Promotion

In this digital age of the music industries it is vital that an artist establish an online presence with a compelling visual identity, written narrative or artist story as well as linking this to an interactive social media presence. A level of consistency also needs to be established to create an effective integrated marketing communications platform as discussed in Chapter 6. The decision making behind the creative portfolio items of an artist website and social media presence will now be outlined.

7.3.1.1 Artist Website

The key to a good artist website is fast loading aesthetically pleasing design (that reflects the current release artwork and brand identity), good quality content that is easily updated, and good interactive elements. The website should be easily navigated and useable with no technical glitches or problems and have a strong focus on conversion actions that lead to the nurturing of artist to fan relationships (Chaffey & Smith, 2013; Nevue, 2011).

Content is key in the design of a website and ‘content marketing’ according to Chaffey (2015), is one of the most important elements of digital marketing in 2015 (Chaffey, 2015). Many web designers build websites from template systems known as content management systems (CMS). This is also a method used by DIY artists to build and maintain their own
webpage (at a low cost). Band Zoogle (https://bandzoogle.com/) or CD Baby (http://www.hostbaby.com/) for example are CMS systems very popular with musicians because they cater specifically to musicians and are easy to use. One of the big advantages of a CMS system for an ISS is that they can manage their own online presence at a low cost. They can also update it with content regularly. Currency is everything in digital marketing. Often the CMS system is linked to the webhost, and additionally you also have the option to secure a domain name.

According to Strauss (2014) most businesses want .com because “most users usually type in the firm name.com as a best guess for the sites location. They also usually want to register the country specific second level domain for SEO purposes” (p. 256). My unique name spelling this enables me to rank highly on a Google Search for my name Cheynne Murphy so to date I have only registered www.cheynnemurphy.com.

I chose the CMS system Squarespace (http://www.squarespace.com/) based on the following reasons:

• I wanted to use a CMS system that was ranked high in customer forum /blog reviews (Wong, 2015).

• I know that Squarespace is a newer, contemporary CMS platform and has good functionality that is reflective of digital marketing trends.

• I was drawn to the template and felt inspired by the clean aesthetics, its functionality and also its e-commerce capability.

• It was cost-effective and easy to use.

According to Chaffey (2008), there are four main factors visitors are looking for in a website; high quality content, ease of use, quick to download and updated frequently. To this end, I set up a system where I could manage content updates via my mobile phone. This system is depicted in Fig 16. On the bottom level are digital marketing management
tools. The main social management tool I used for my own system was Hoot Suite as discussed. Google alerts and Mention are also useful in letting you know when there is discussion about the artist online. I used Squarespace as the CMS and as of the writing of this I currently manage my mailing list using Reverbnation /Fanreach although there are many good email marketing systems available.

Figure 16   Managing an online presence as an ISS

On the top level, the design of an artist website needs to consider key action or conversion steps that transform a visitor to the site into being a lead generated, fan or customer. In terms of social media, again the point needs to be made between having a passive visitor versus an engagement or action. The key conversion elements in the native environments of each social media platform are things like, views, followers, likes, comments and subscribers. This fosters communication and closeness between artist and fan and enables notifications of content activities and uploads to be more visible to them.
From a marketers point of view the design should emphasize specific content that leads to some kind of interaction or conversion as shown in the actions on the right of the artist website. Conversion focuses on the proportion of web visitors who actually take an action on the website (J. Strauss & Frost, 2014, p. 466). Chaffey (2008) also suggests that you should prioritize your most valuable content in a similar way to a supermarket using merchandising to promote specific products and actions (p. 222). This was the rationale behind using verbs on each of the three key images on the home page to stimulate action and conversion as shown in Figure 17.

**Figure 17  Example: Use of verbs to prompt action**

Additionally I elected to keep a clear contact email icon on each page, as this is a key conversion action. Other comments about developing this website were the use of the Bandcamp widget (Figure 18) over other audio play options because it has the ability for someone streaming the song to buy it straight from the widget (they are transferred to an online store). Another critical reflection on why I chose the bandcamp as the audio player widget was that they only take 15% from the final sale. At the time of writing the exegesis other online distribution options such as Reverbnation were charging a higher commission. Other widgets such as Soundcloud players will offer a streaming option but no buy function. A Soundcloud player however can be useful for previewing songs and trying to gather comments on the song and as a means to increase plays and social media popularity.
Figure 18  Example of an audio player widget with built in action step

The latest news section on the website is managed via Twitter (see Figure 19). I use the Hootsuite App (https://hootsuite.com/) which allows me to send a status update to Twitter but also nominate if I want to share this to my Facebook profile, Facebook page and so on. Thus I can choose to just update the latest news or choose to also synchronise the update in relevant social media. Additionally Hootsuite allows me to schedule in status updates, which can be done weekly, allowing content to always be current and allows me to do this task when inspired. Another social media management tool used is bandpage (https://www.bandpage.com/). This propagates basic artist information like a biography, photo’s and other information to a wide range of popular social media sites.

Figure 19  Example of a Twitter container labelled Latest News on the Home page of the artist website

Reverbnation allows artists to share content on its platform with a Facebook page. I have also set up a Reverbnation widget for live shows (See Figure 20), which can also be updated via the smartphone once and deploy the changes to the website and Facebook
automatically. In fact having a mobile app was a key reason that I used Reverbnation for this function. Other possible options such as www.bandpage.com did not have a mobile app. Widgets are mini web applications that are used to share content throughout the web and are incredibly useful to save time when updating information online (J. Strauss & Frost, 2014, p. 351). Additionally this widget can also be made available on Facebook and can be placed in multiple locations as an embedded code. In summary this cross-functionality with Reverbnation and Facebook as well as the mobile app which can be used for quick updates on the go were key reasons I engaged with Reverbnation tools.

UPCOMING SHOWS

Figure 20  Example of widget updated on the mobile phone to update website & Facebook

I also have key images regularly updating using an Instagram widget on my home page that draws in the latest 6 photos I take from my phone using the Instagram app which again allows me to be more interactive and offer content on the website that is always updating.

INSTAGRAM

Figure 21  Example Instagram container on website
I also use a Reverbnation widget to have a flashing testimonials/review page.

Figure 22  Example of a Reverbnation Press Widget on Home Page

I can also update my artist blog from a Squarespace app which is then synchronised to Tumblr. I have redirected my blog because Tumblr is one of the biggest blog platforms in the world and has its own native audience (Sensis, 2014). It also adds to search engine optimisation by having an external blog referring back and linking to the artist website.

7.3.1.2  Key External Traffic Sources

The middle row of arrows on Figure 20 indicate traffic sources other than the mailing list and via the artist’s own social media platforms. It is beyond the scope of the exegesis to offer a detailed analysis of each strategy from the lens of an ISS however this would offer a good area for further research. A brief overview is now provided based on digital marketing literature (Amedeo, 2009; Beekhuyzen et al., 2011; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Chaffey & Smith, 2013; Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2014; Donnelly, 2014; Nevue, 2011; J. Strauss & Frost, 2014).

Search Engine Optimisation

As discussed earlier an artist can optimise their website to maximise ranking on ‘organic searches’ based on certain key words. Strauss (2014) discusses the strategy of either appearing high on a search engine results page ‘organically’ or using ads on search engine sites to generate click throughs (p. 474). Adwords traffic is discussed below. To gain a high rank on results page organically I may try and optimise my website for Folk rock music and Australia. Signing up for a Google adwords account allows an artist to research popular key word searches and monitor trends in what words people use when searching for music. As discussed earlier, the unique spelling of my name allowed me to rank at the
top of Google when a search for ‘Cheynne Murphy’ is conducted. The downside of this may be that people struggle to recall the spelling or search using more traditional versions of the name such as ‘Shane Murphy’. SEO also informed the use of ‘Byron Bay, Australia’ being used in the web content to appeal more to increase searchability from an international audience.

*Adwords*

This is a popular digital marketing tool that can be used to have the website link appear on search engines results but as a sponsored ad /link. The difference here is that you pay-per-click (PPC) for each visitor to your website based on a system of bidding used by search engine providers. Google is by far the largest owning around 70% of the search market (J. Strauss & Frost, 2014, p. 356). An ISS would be hoping that this traffic that is paid for would convert into an action. A key aspect of this strategy is that the ad ‘copy’ relates to the key word search (ideally using the key words in the ad) and that the visitor who clicks on the ad be taken to a ‘landing page’ on the artist website that contains content that relates specifically to the ad. This strategy relies on visitors converting to sales and that the sales profits cover or exceed the investment into adword spending.

*Online advertising*

While adwords strategies relate more to search marketing, there are also a range of social media advertising options on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram etc. as well as the possibility of banner ads on websites that share your own target audience. This form of promotion is sometimes referred to as non-traditional advertising and relies on research into the target audience characteristics and trying to place your message in front of those most likely to be interested in your offer. Payment is usually based on the ‘reach’ or potential traffic that would see the ad in any given month or a PPC basis. Similarly to the adwords this requires having a landing page that relates closely to your ‘ad copy’ or content to encourage conversions.
**Online publicity**

This can include earning editorial in digital content associated with traditional media, participating in discussion forums around your music genre (leaving links to your music), getting interviewed on podcasts, blogs or YouTube interviews. Also getting featured on popular music websites as an artist will generate considerable traffic. Strauss (2014) states that this earned media can be initiated by the company through branded content distribution, such as entertaining YouTube videos, press releases and utilising press aggregators to push out releases to a wider audience. The engagement of specialist online publicists (or traditional publicists that have expertise in the digital space) may be useful here budget permitting.

**Affiliate Marketing**

This is a strategy similar to referral marketing whereby a person or business links to your product and if a sale is completed an analytics trail is generated that allows you to calculate a commission to pay the affiliate. Strauss (2014) defines it as “A link to an e-tailer’s website, put in by firms to make a commission on all purchases by referred customers” (p. 465). This is a very popular method in digital marketing and Amazon exploits this as a key part of their marketing strategy. An example of this strategy could be for an ISS to sign up to an affiliate (such as Amazon) and include a link to a book or album they like and recommend to earn additional revenue, or having another website that has good web traffic link to their product and share a commission on sales.

**Offline sources**

These are any offline links to your website including links from posters and advertising, from interviews and publicity, backdrops at live performances and so on.
Internet Radio

There are thousands of Internet radio stations globally some genre driven. These offer an ideal opportunity for non-terrestrial digital radio airplay. Some of the larger radio networks also have digital opportunities such as double J the digital version of JJJ in Australia. Double J and Unearthed (Triple J digital stations) for example have the ability to play more music in the day than Triple J does and Double J also caters to a 30’s and over audience as opposed to the 18-24 audience of triple J (Griffiths, 2015).

7.3.1.3 Social media presence

According to Yellow Social Media report (2014) the leading social media sites in terms of popularity are: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Google Plus, Pinterest, Tumblr (Sensis, 2014, p. 6). This insight was also gained conducting a competitor analysis into the use of social media. This analysis revealed that Google plus was a social media site that a lot of the major artists had but upon closer investigation into the profile of Angus and Julia stone for example (https://plus.google.com/+AngusAndJulia), it was evident that the platform was not popular in terms of interaction (only 364 followers compared to 53,000 followers on Instagram). However a number of digital marketing industry based blogs point to its importance from a search engine optimisation perspective (R. Harris, 2014).

Some artist’s use Facebook as a main webpage but the argument against this is the loss of individual brand identity by being found within the framework of a multi-national organization. This approach limits creative expression and has significant limitations on visual brand identity. It can also suggest a level of unprofessionalism by not having a website. This is open to debate. The key here is to feed selected social media into the artist website e.g., Instagram photos or tweets (using the CMS tools), a blog etc. so that the content is lively and up-to-date. If done correctly, this can all be managed from a smartphone.
Summarising the considerations in the setting up of a social media presence:

- When communicating in social media it is best not to try and ‘sell’ products but to think about how to entertain, educate, inform and interact with people.

- Each social media has different communication angles so that YouTube offers audio-visual content and the opportunity to video blog i.e., Vlog; Instagram is a pictorial blog; Twitter is a micro-blog; and Tumblr is a good multi-media blog platform. Facebook pages are good for sharing artist news and acting as a forum for fans and finally Facebook profiles are a very good tool for an ISS to promote events at low cost. Facebook music pages require advertising to guarantee exposure with your ‘likes’ (using the ‘Boost’ tool), however Facebook profile pages have more reach organically.

- Social media management tools to schedule status updates and synchronise posts assist time poor musicians.

- An artist website can be updated with the use of social media feeds into containers on the website.

- Attention to consistency in the visual identity of each social media should be employed.

- Each social media ideally requires ‘native’ marketing approaches that recognise the characteristics of the community and platform as opposed to simply synchronising all posts (Chaffey & Ellis- Chadwick, 2012; J. Strauss & Frost, 2014; Tu et al., 2014). Synchronising some posts can be useful to the ISS that is time poor but may not always yield the best result.
7.3.2 Direct marketing and personal selling

Online promotion and direct marketing go hand in hand. Online promotion is used to collect leads that can be used to develop relationships with fans via direct marketing. It can also be used to direct traffic to the artist website. This is largely achieved through interactive technologies that allow you to communicate directly to customers in any location in the world. These are:

- Databases – for fans and industry contacts
- Email marketing systems (EMS)
- SMS text marketing

One of the leading proponents of independent ‘direct to fan’ marketing is John Oszajca who runs a website and training program that focuses specifically on this promotional strategy. He says:

This all really boils down to relationship building at the end of the day. This is about cultivating a tribe and communicating with your fans. …… You’re getting your fans familiar with you, building a bond, sending them links to more music, videos, blog posts, you’re encouraging them to communicate with you. But because it is all pre-written and scheduled, there is a scalability there that you could just never accomplish if you had to go out there, tour, and shake hands, one fan at a time. (Oszajca, 2015)

My own practice-based research yielded the following observations:

- Free EMS’s such as the very popular Mail Chimp (http://mailchimp.com/) can be problematic because they are so highly available and open source emails can be lost
in spam filters (R. Latimar of Rich Training E-mail systems, personal communication, November 1, 2014).

- Other cheap alternatives such as Reverbnation’s Fanreach have limitations in terms of technical features and analytics. More expensive options allow you to monitor every click a customer makes (or doesn’t) on your email. It will show what percentage of people actually opened an email and of those that did, what action did they take and give you real time monitoring. This allows the fine-tuning of communications.

Further research into email mailing systems would be a good area of further research. My own mailing list is currently being managed by Reverbnation, largely due to the fact that I only have a small mailing list and an investment in this area may involve an additional monthly fee that I am unwilling to invest in currently. A discussion with the singer of well known Australian band COG who currently fronts and manages a new act called ‘The Occupants’ revealed the value of using a paid monthly provider (in this case a custom built email system) whereby a mailout to a database of 3500 fans yielded a return of $8000 CD sales in a single email communication (F. Gower, personal communication, November 1, 2015). As the mailing list grows for an ISS as well as the willingness to develop direct marketing skills a paid email marketing system would be a strong consideration as a promotional tool.

The use of personal selling techniques, whereby an individual engages in persuasive communication directly with industry and consumers alike, links to direct marketing especially in terms of telephone and email contact with industry representatives.

7.3.3 Publicity

Whilst publicity is a widely used word and often confused with advertising, in a promotional plan, it is the result of a strategy used to promote a music release by ‘earning’
editorial in media not directly paid for by the ISS. There is a relationship to advertising in the sense that journalists/editors view a story being pitched to them more favourably if there is a commitment to purchasing advertising space in the media channel. Hiring a publicist can cost between 250-5000/month but can be a very useful paid team member for your project.

7.3.3.1 Media kit
The media kit is a key tool to promote an artist to media. To earn publicity you need a media release that outlines a big concept or angle around the project. What is the story? How is it interesting to the reader? A captivating or interesting high quality professional photo (captioned) also helps the cause considerably (M. Beard et al., 2006). The media kit at a minimum has a:

- Song or song collection.
- Media release (1-2 page) with a ‘story/article’ which is focused on the ‘front story’, latest news/accomplishment/show for the artist.
- Biography (1-2 page) focused on the ‘back story’ for the artist.
- Quality photo image.

When creating the media release I was mindful that journalists are also time poor and won’t necessarily extrapolate from the release and turn it into a story. It needs to read like its ready to publish. A good validation for my media release (see Appendix 3) was that a regional paper used it as the cover story for their entertainment section (republished online here: http://cvreview.com.au/freedom-riding-the-freedom-horse/). The journalist did rearrange certain sections from the bio and media release but very little was changed in terms of the story.
Two key media angles developed for A Horse Called Freedom were:

1. Modern Day Warrior: Integrating the American Indian mythology with the modern day warrior from a male’s perspective – what does it mean to be a male in modern times? Pitching, to spiritual magazines and men’s health publications etc.

2. Research angle: Independent music marketing in the digital age – highlighting the educational aspect of the project (This angle earned a documentary editorial in a Byron Bay Bay FM radio interview artscape interview, and a featured editorial in the Australian folk ‘Trad n Now’ publication).

I consulted with a professional publicist to get feedback on the story and photography that lead to minor adjustments and a new photo choice as discussed in the artwork section.

The media release differs from the biography in that its primary focus is on the release at hand e.g., the album release and its content features this ‘front story’ narrative e.g., the album concept and recording process. An ISS may like to weave some of the back story into the media release but the biography will stay relatively the same over time with minor adjustments and updates but the media release changes with each new release /campaign/story /tour.

Other publicity planning steps include:

1. Identification of all the different publications that offer music reviews. These can include genre specific magazines, reviews in newspapers, street press and so on offline and online.
2. Identification of a suitable reviewer (s) most suited to the genre of music.
3. Contact them and/or email them your release, with the media kit (which serves as a context for the reviewer and allows for more narrative in the review beyond just music critique).

4. Follow up to see when and where the review will be published.

Some other elements often required for online applications or for radio and media are positioning statements. As discussed in Chapter 6, “positioning refers to the process whereby consumers visualise brand x in relation to brand y” (M. Beard et al., 2006, p. 55). This led me to generate a short music description, descriptions for each of the songs and an album positioning statement (See Appendix 8).

The end outcome of all this promotional activity is coverage in print media, interviews on radio and if lucky a TV performance. This exposure is valuable in building an artist’s profile in the market place.

7.3.4 Radio airplay campaign

Radio is a form of broadcast media and often associated with publicity. However because of its significance in terms of specific exposure it is analysed as a separate strategy. Radio remains one of the key media channels influencing music preferences and purchase behaviour (Bélanger & Manchester, 2013; IFPI, 2014a; Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2014). This is most significant in terms of the mainstream top 40 pop genre, however community radio in Australia, college radio (in America especially) and national radio broadcasters in Australia such as the ABC represent a huge potential market for exposure for the ISS. Some of the commercial stations do have digital stations more open to independent music and they also may have Australian content music shows as well worth investigating. To get on these stations a media kit can be sent to the music director initially and then an ISS can target DJ’s specifically who run the shows that support the specific music genre being offered. Station program guides can be accessed on the Internet.
Key insights from my own practice were:

- I promoted a double single two months from a CD launch to radio which helped cater to the cross-over nature of the music style and allowed for two waves of publicity. In terms of my digital servicing to radio for the singles I included a link to stream both songs, a high quality MP3 download and also a Wav download option using the Hightail service. This was supported with a short cover letter and media kit attachment.

- I gained support from an Australian community radio initiative Airit (http://www.amrap.com.au/airit.html) that facilitated the downloading of three select tracks and the provision of an associated database for follow up activities.

- I gained valuable information by ringing up stations as opposed to emailing them and the response was instantaneous.

In terms of digital promotion to radio, research suggests that sending MP3’s is not a great option and according to Nick Findlay, assistant music director at Australia’s leading youth network triple J validating the approach taken:

If you’re digitally servicing us music, email us a link to a wav download and if possible an online stream. The stream lets us listen to it instantly, while the wav link means we have a broadcast quality version in case we love it so much we want to put it straight on air. NEVER email us an mp3 or a wav as an email attachment; our inboxes are bursting at the seams with big files. (Dayman, 2014)

There is a synergy between radio airplay and online platforms, in that an ISS can use social media networks to reach out and ask that they request the artist’s songs on radio. Radio airplay in turn also can generate organic searches of the
artist leading to more traffic to the online platforms. Digital radio platform extensions may also be used to link to that artist and their profile(s) again driving traffic to the online platforms.

7.3.5 Live Performance

Live performance is a product in itself and great revenue earner for hardworking musicians. But it is listed as a promotional tool here in its capacity to promote and sell recorded music offerings. Some musicians are very good at ‘selling’ their product live. I have found if I am happy with a sound recording and I am presenting a close representation that it flows on that I will sell it with more enthusiasm. This promotional tool guided some of the decisions I made during the music production and also the album artwork.

A live performance also functions as a media event in the sense that you can earn publicity for each performance you do via editorials in print or radio interviews (links to publicity). The CD launch is a key opportunity to combine this strategy with publicity. It is also important to have a highly visible mailing list sign up at the door (links to direct marketing). Tablets can be good for this also so that people can sign directly into your database. You can also use traditional advertising methods to promote the shows and include a website link for your recording. New opportunities include live streaming options on YouTube and promoting real time performance to social media. A live show backdrop really helps artist awareness and should include a website address. This raises awareness of who is performing and helps consumers to remember the artist. The album launch at various venues and an associated tour is one of the very important promotional tools for an album.

Live touring is key to generating publicity for an album in traditional media because when an artist is performing locally it adds an important relevancy in terms of giving editorial to the album release. Thus publicity efforts are synchronised with tour dates to
maximise artist exposure. Furthermore as was stated in the previous section on radio, print media also has digital extensions in terms of online content, which could include video, web or social links to the touring artist driving traffic to online platforms again.

### 7.3.6 Music Video

A low budget music video requires skill and creativity to make something of broadcast quality. However a YouTube channel that features music video’s of different styles and formats is a vital component in the online presence of an ISS. YouTube is one of the most popular websites on the Internet and audio-visual is amongst the most popular media content online (Chaffey, 2015; J. Strauss & Frost, 2014). Artistically and creatively, I was excited at the prospect of making a music video orientated around a song. However commercially speaking I estimated that the cost of this video would represent 50% of the total cost of the album production. From a commercial perspective I needed to consider what ‘return on investment’ I could expect from the video. Aside from YouTube views, I was unsure as to the likelihood of getting exposure on television and cable programs specialising in music videos. There would be a significant effort required to manage this process and gain airplay outcomes in the light of significant competition. So based on the cost of production and the uncertainty of returns I decided instead to just have the ‘Making of A Horse Called Freedom: Parts 1-4’. Behind the scene’s making of video’s can also be useful for teaser promotional purposes and serve to raise interest in the sound recording itself.

At the time of writing I was also looking into creating a live studio recording /video. For most major festival applications a quality live video is the insurance that an act can actually perform and is used as a component in the decision making process to book an act especially from an overseas location. (G. Wright –Mullumbimby Music Festival, personal communication, April 10, 2013).
Key insights based on my own practice were:

- The use of a student production team lowered the cost of production for these videos, and also my expectations, which resulted in me being satisfied with the final outcomes.

- It was very good from an artistic point of view to do interviews during the actual recording process because I feel I had a heightened connection with the songs, collaborators and vision of the music at that time. In the next Chapter the combination of filming and photography during recording can provide an efficient way to developing promotional materials.

- The video’s serve as an excellent audio-visual memoir for the artist.

- Finally whilst the filming was intrusive at times, after a while the musicians forgot about it and in some ways it made the process more ‘special’. If a musician really suffered from stage fright when being filmed this would present a real issue.

7.3.7 **Traditional Advertising**

“Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of products in the media” (Kotler, 2012, p. 577). Advertising you pay for, publicity is earned. It can take the form of:

- Advertisements in magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, Film etc.
- Outdoor Posters/Flyers/Postcards/Business cards/ Billboards etc.,

Some background considerations to my own choices were:

- The ‘reach’ or potential customers to be exposed to the message.
- Developing posters with multiple use -e.g., advertising a show as well as including product links.
- Media planning is a balancing act between these two variables. Reach – how many
people are exposed to the message and frequency, how often to advertise in the media.

I included a brief discussion of online advertising options in the online promotion section. The focus of this discussion is traditional advertising. In my own practice I engaged in developing posters for a CD launch as well as flier business cards for the same launch. The final advertising I did for the launch was to conduct a community radio campaign, which involved the development of a radio advertisement. Another advertising strategy under development is the creation of a café sampler – and send a free digital download (320KPS) and/or hardcopy to select cafes Australia wide. This is a combination of direct marketing and advertising.

Most of the issues in the development of the posters have been discussed in terms of choosing a graphic designer, and using IMC to guide design. Also as stated before I deferred most creative control of the posters and merchandise to the graphic artist.

7.3.8 Sales promotions

Sales promotions are often used in conjunction with advertising. They are short-term incentives to encourage purchase of a product or service (M. Beard et al., 2006; Kotler, 2012). They increase the perceived value for the customer and can include:

- Additional tracks (Bonus tracks, remixes etc.)
- Merchandising offers (E.g., free T-shirt, cap, sticker)
- Bundles
- Value added offerings e.g., DVD or live recording

I combined this strategy with bundled pricing strategies as shown in the following example from my artist store in Figure 23:
7.3.9 Merchandising

As an ISS, if you create merchandise to giveaway (like stickers), then this can be considered a promotional tool. Making something like a T-shirt and selling it at cost or even giving it away with a CD is also a promotional expense (sales promotion expense specifically) from a budgeting perspective. If however some merchandise is produced to sell at a profit this is called a ‘product’ from a marketing perspective and represents another possible artist revenue stream. In an age where music is becoming increasingly intangible special, unique merchandising and bundling options are worthy of consideration as discussed in the previous section on sales promotions.

Key insights based on my own practice were:

- It was discussed earlier that the production of merchandise was not aesthetically satisfying for me, as I wanted a bigger image on the shirt. As a result I have a lack of motivation to ‘sell’.
• The discovery of digital image direct to t-shirt printing was useful.

• It is a powerful tool serving revenue generating and promotional objectives.

7.3.10 Partnerships /sponsorship

In order to secure partners or sponsors an ISS must be able to provide unique opportunities for companies who will increase their own sales or brand awareness through associating with them. “Sponsorship is a business arrangement through which a company provides funds, logistics, services or other forms of support” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 119). Sponsorship and endorsements have become more important as revenue from record sales has fallen and artists have sought other ways to make money and fund tours (p. 119). Companies really want to gauge the level of exposure for their brand but also consider the long-term development of the relationship. In order to gain sponsors or endorsement opportunities consider what companies are looking for:

• An appealing image. It needs to be compatible with the company and its own brand identity.
• An existing or demonstrated audience, which will gain exposure for the company brand/product
• Existing media exposure
• Clear benefits and exposure for the brand outlined
• The level of professionalism of the artist/event support team

An ISS can also view licensing as a form of cross promotion or partnership that “has clear benefits for both artists and the film /television production companies involved, due to the potential of cross-marketing and brand linkages” (Anderton et al., 2013, p. 117). This area of research is beyond the scope of this exegesis but self-publishing represents tremendous opportunities for the ISS and can also generate significant revenue for the ISS. Other
possible partnerships or sponsorships are through government grant programs and also via partnerships with other artists to facilitate cross-promotion.

7.3.11 Music competitions

These can be national and international and offer good promotional opportunities. The competition is fierce however and it could be a budget drain for an ISS. A local example would be the Australian Songwriters Association (ASA) awards.

7.3.12 Music Tradeshows

These can be expensive in terms of travel costs. Two of the biggest music tradeshows in the world are international in Europe (Midem) and Texas (SXSW) but there are also a number of local tradeshows/conferences available for exposure e.g., Big Sound in Brisbane. These tradeshows are especially useful for networking and gaining the support of music industry representatives. Attendance and participation in Tradeshows may even result in contracts with third-partys’ such as record labels, management, or publishers etc.

In conclusion the ISS planning to promote an album needs a significant amount of lead time (and some financial investment) to generate the branded promotional materials, book launch shows and plan other promotional strategies. The ISS needs to decide how many tasks they will undertake themselves and budget for outsourcing other tasks. Significant time and financial investment is required for promotion and without the development of this aspect of the marketing mix the chances of success for an ISS are significantly reduced. In fact it is argued that a lack of promotional activities (assuming a high quality product has been produced and packaged) is one of the main reasons independent musicians struggle to find success in the market place.
Chapter 8 - Conclusions

This exegesis has examined the decision making process required by an ISS in the preparation, production and marketing of an album in the digital age of the music industries. The practice of songwriting and music production is different in its focus to that of the practice of independent music marketing however a nexus exists between the two and this dynamic has been highlighted in the discussion. Marketing theory has been applied to this analysis from the lens of an ISS linking together both of these practices. Digital music marketing approaches have been explored, and there has been an identification of different systems and tools that can be useful in the practice of independent contemporary music production and marketing. Furthermore management skills are also required to coordinate the processes involved. This creative practice has been significantly transformed by technological developments in the music industries and changes in the socio-cultural environment that have affected how people find, access, select, listen, and share music. It is hoped that the following discussion of key reflections will be useful for ISSs’ and independent musicians overall in their pursuit of career development in the industry, gaining industry support and just having a better awareness of the processes involved.

8.1 Reflection 1: A self-managed, self-promoted ISS releasing an album in the digital age is engaged in three creative practices that are interrelated including contemporary music, independent music marketing and management practices.

The analysis provided clearly outlines a process that involves creativity and songwriting and music production. Traditional music business models have separated this product development process from the marketing processes that follow (Anderton et al., 2013; Ogden et al., 2011). The evolution of social media has created closer fan /artist relationships demanding the development of artistic content beyond just the music into things like multi-media blogs, music video logs, behind the scenes ‘making of footage’ and so on. This requires a new perspective on traditional contemporary music practice. A
new paradigm is emerging that requires an ISS to think more broadly about contemporary music practice and consider the role that independent music marketing has on career development and commercial outcomes. In the absence of an artist manager this also requires management skills to facilitate collaborative processes and partnerships across music and marketing practice.

The Do It Yourself model is limited in scope in what it can achieve. An ISS in the digital age needs to partner with social media entities and establish an online presence. Chapter 5 further explained some of the key business support relationships that can be necessary to produce and market music including producers and engineers, promotional support, distribution partners, accounting and legal support and so on. Morrow (2006) supports the idea that creativity is required in managing all related music industries processes. He states, “Managerial creativity is necessary for artistic creativity to flourish” (p. 367). Unfortunately for many artists they “are left to their own devices” in terms of management (p. 370). If an ISS can view the process from a holistic perspective and see that commercial and creative considerations are implicit in all stages of the music production process, then it may be possible to transcend the commerce versus creativity dichotomy of previous music industries industrial models and lead to more successful career outcomes. As Bilton and Leary (2002) state, “management has ceased to become a science and has become an art” (p. 62). This perspective may also lead to less resistance and a more seamless ‘flow’ in tasks across each area leading to a psychological state driving the process of creation that appears more effortless and resulting in more positive feelings for the ISS (M Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Underlying this reflection is the importance of marketing skill development. A skilled musician may not be by a virtue of their musical skill, a skilled marketer and commercial product manager. It provides a strong rationale for educators to present more integrated programs that address all creative practices involved that is: songwriting, musicianship, production, marketing and management skills.
8.2 Reflection 2: Decisions based on personal feelings and judgements may not necessarily match the decisions required for career advancement and commercial goals.

Songwriting has transformative and personal development benefits for the artist (Beech, 2014). The value an ISS places on some songs over others may be different to what the end consumer values and what the market considers commercial (Caves, 2000). If the creative process is considered as separate to the promotional process there is a risk this may be prioritised over potential commercial gains (Fillis, 2006; Hirschman, 1983).

In fact from a marketing perspective, ISS artistic processes considered in isolation of marketing processes, can result in a form of ‘marketing myopia’ around the creative product where there is an inability to see beyond personal benefits and there is a focus on artistic features but a lack of consideration of consumer needs (Levitt, 1960). An ISS seeking a to make a living out of music needs to be aware of indulged decision-making based only personal preference and feelings (which may meet artistic goals but not commercial ones). This may decrease opportunities for career advancement and the commercial exploitation potential of their work. It is important to seek objective feedback from a wide variety of consumers, collaborators and industry professionals to identify the more viable or ‘popular’ ideas. In a sense an ISS has to develop an approach similar to the A & R function in a record label that focuses on matching talent to markets (Simpson, 2006, p. 339). With a wider ‘sample’ of feedback, this process identifies and highlights those creative ideas that have wider appeal.

This corresponds to the concept development and test-marketing phases in the new product development (NPD) process in marketing literature (Crealey, 2003; Kotler, 2012). It is advantageous for an ISS to gain some ongoing insights into current market trends and developments to guide the development of creative products and marketing strategies.
Throughout the conception and development of the album I was actively seeking feedback from industry people, friends and collaborators in order to gain more objectivity in my decision-making. However as mentioned earlier, as an ISS knowing that I would ultimately be the most important salesman for this project, I reflect that I relied also on personal or intuitive feelings in order to have a strong sense of connection or passion in what I was communicating. In reflection it needs to be acknowledged that artists like myself may struggle to adopt a rational marketing approach to music production and product development because of the inherent bias of being a producer-consumer in the first instant and a marketer as a ‘means to an ends’ (Caves, 2000; Fillis, 2006). It may be the transformative nature of creativity becomes more important to the individual as opposed to commercial gain (Beech, 2014).

Independent artists actively seeking industry support by the way of a record label may be required to reduce such bias but it is still important to recognise that artistic integrity is also useful in establishing a unique point of difference in the music market place. Finding balance in this complex dynamic can be a real challenge for a self-managed ISS.

8.3 Reflection 3: Playing to your musical, songwriting and collaborator strengths to support the idea screening, selection and music product development process.

ISS’s need to identify which ideas to pursue in terms of the time, effort, and financial resources required to successfully release music in the digital age. For commercial success, as the previous reflection outlined, it is important to differentiate between engaging in contemporary music practice for personal enjoyment verses engaging in contemporary music practice that will result in commercial outcomes. A lot of time, energy and resources are required to market music effectively and an ISS needs to be careful that they don’t remain in a perpetual state of product development. With the active engagement of continual market research and feedback an ISS can focus more closely on
those ideas aligned to their artistic and musical strengths. The consideration of how the music will be ‘sold’ particularly in the live performance sector (which is a growth segment in the music industries) should also have some influence over the choices being made in terms of the final music production.

8.4 Reflection 4: *The use of a home studio recording DAW for additional sound recording, tracking and mixing can offer significant costs savings without noticeable detriment to product quality.*

Having the option to overdub tracks in a low cost environment can take the pressure off the budget and the expectations of performance. If an ISS is comfortable in a home setting, then it can promote a good performance, which is vitally important in sound recordings. Music producer Daniel Lanois states, “Once you have emotion and the pitch is great and the vibe is there, you can do anything you want” (Massey, 2009, p. 20). Sound engineer Kevin Killen (U2, Peter Gabriel, Elvis Costello, Tori Amos) also shares:

> Like a lot of people now, I’ll go in and track at a recognized studio for two or three weeks, and then for the vast majority of overdubs I’ll go to somebody’s house or a low budget room with Protools LE and a couple of reasonable sounding microphones and preamps – I’ve got a couple of friends who literally have little studios in their bedrooms.(Massey, 2009, p. 107)

My own practice-based experience also supports this and is evidenced in Appendix 7 – Album reviews. The combination of using a home DAW and the mixing in the box (MITB) technique resulted in a quality sound recording on a low budget.
8.5 **Reflection 5: Importance of a planned music marketing approach.**

Throughout this exegesis the point has been made about the importance of an ISS to consider the bigger picture development of their career and become more strategic in terms of planning music business activities (M. Beard et al., 2006; Lathrop, 2013). There is a necessity to move beyond what Kotler (2012) describes as the ‘product concept’ (build it and they will come), the ‘selling concept’ (that focuses on selling techniques) into an approach that considers all aspects of the marketing process from the outset and is more connected and interactive with consumers in general. In some ways there has been a development of promotional focus away from only the touring and recorded music release to the artist’s activities and brand generally. The societal marketing concept is a good approach because in an age of social media it is becoming increasingly important for businesses to have a broader perspective and the idea is that marketing decisions should consider consumers’ needs, as well as the society’s long run interests (Kotler, 2012, p. 17).

The trend of crowd funding is a good example that highlights the opportunity of engaging consumers in the creative processes from the beginning. As an ISS it is important to be thinking downstream of how you are going to market the album at the point of generating a budget so that resources can be allocated into the development and management of promotional strategies that may require implementation before, during or after the recording process.

A planned marketing approach that considers market research, maximises the strengths of an artist, takes advantage of the technological and promotional opportunities in the digital age helps inform the decision making process. Planning also leads to efficiencies when managing small budgets.
A planned marketing approach for an ISS could include:

1. Use of pre-production activities to generate and select the best ideas, and concept develop these to a point that results in efficiencies when investing in studio time and music production.

2. Having a good understanding of copyright and ensuring no infringements are occurring. Establishing clearly the owner (s) of the sound recording master and the composition rights holder (s) to ensure no legal issues will impede the marketing release process.

3. Filming pre-production activities and sharing this with social media networks to create media interest in the music.

4. Organising the photo-shoot, filming activities (behind the scenes and even a music video), artwork, social media content and so on during the recording process to generate quality branded promotional materials at a more affordable budget and timely.

5. Setting up a connected and interactive social media presence and artist website at the start of the project and budgeting for digital promotion methods to gain online traffic.

8.6 Reflection 6: The case for a 'single' based approach for the ISS.

Given the limited production and marketing budget of most ISSs there is a strong case for focusing on marketing individual music compositions (‘singles’) rather than ‘albums’ as a method to gain market awareness that leads to career development. Woodworth (2012) makes a compelling case that was supported by my own practice based experiences that:
• Radio tends to focus on songs.
• Resources required for one song are considerable lower than an album freeing up resources for more promotion.
• There can be vigilance on quality rather than quantity, which may gain more market attention.
• There is increasing evidence of people listening via playlists via iTunes and streaming services rather than full albums.

It needs to be acknowledged that there are music consumers that do still like album formats and the sonic consistency of a song-by-song approach may be difficult to manage. Also it could be less satisfying for the ISS who may enjoy creating a larger body of work and the artistic satisfaction they derive from this extended process.

8.7 **Reflection 7: Online and social media represents a big marketing opportunity for an ISS but can have negative impacts on contemporary music practice.**

As the Internet is the major technology innovation of the digital age of communication, and the organisation of the modern music industries, it is the one of the most important facets of the independent music marketing strategy. There are challenges here for the ISS. They need a certain level of technical and marketing prowess to ‘brand’ themselves effectively online. They need skills in graphic design, audio-visual content and a time to develop content and manage their social media identity (s). If an ISS cannot embrace this aspect of music marketing it may interrupt what Csikszentmihalyi (2014) calls creative ‘flow’ and may result in negative impacts on music practice. On the other hand it may be an exciting process to have creative control over these processes and provide an opportunity for real authentic marketing (Boyle, 2004). Social media music marketer Amanda Palmer (2014) is a great proponent of this direct to fan relationship and suggests
a ‘sweet spot’ where artists can freely share their talents and directly feel the returns of their artistic gifts from their community (Palmer, 2014).

In the analysis of my own online promotion approach, a key decision for an ISS is the selection of an appropriate CMS system for the website that has good connectivity with social media. In both website design and social media content development there is a need to promote clear action steps available for consumers that act as connection points and create a closer artist/fan relationship in terms of contact and notifications of artist activities. Maintaining a social media network and an artist website is not very useful to an ISS on a commercial level unless it ultimately leads to increased popularity and this can result in financial return to the ISS from sales of sound recordings, live performance bookings, merchandise, sponsorships or licensing.

8.8 Reflection 8: Importance of maximising multiple revenue streams including merchandising, partnerships, licencing as well as live performance.

It is clear that in the digital age there are multiple income streams available in the digital age. It is also clear that the music business is one that contains a very high level of risk. Sound recording revenues have been failing in recent years and not yet offset by new digital revenue streams (IFPI, 2014a). Live performance revenues are rising (LPA, 2013), licensing opportunities are increasing (IFPI, 2012) and co-branding opportunities (Anderton et al., 2013) are growing. An ISS that plans strategies to address all these possible revenue-raising opportunities is more likely to achieve commercial returns on their creative practice.

8.9 Reflection 9: The importance of being self-motivated, self-confident and having enough time and resources to implement a plan to market music.

All the marketing strategies in the world do not mean a thing if you don’t have the motivation, time or resources to execute the idea. Lack of motivation for the ISS can stem
from functional areas such as a lack of skills, budget or team support or from psychological areas such as self worth issues and confidence. Amanda Palmer (2014) highlights this issue. Some artists believe they need to be artistically pure and beyond the trappings of commercial influence. Or that it may simply relate to the fact that “we just can’t see what we do as important enough to merit help” (p. 64). As mentioned before other issues may result in a reluctance to take on tasks that take an ISS away from the pleasures of music creation and collaboration, or a resistance based on a perceived dichotomy between marketing and artistic musical expression.

I realised in my own practice I was feeling overwhelmed by too many things to do with too little time and I had my own motivation issues that relate to the discussion above. To help my own ‘flow’ I decided to break the workload down to a more manageable situation that involved doing just 3 tasks per day on a marketing /management level with an emphasis on those tasks related to actual income generation. This ‘three things a day’ theory relieved pressure and allowed me to feel more positive toward the tasks. Each ISS needs to find their own balance in the way they manage tasks between each practice and how and when this occurs.

In terms of strategic decision making artists should differentiate between major and minor decisions in terms of creative control and management. This relates to the amount of time and energy an artist has available and whether or not they choose to be involved in every aspect of the process. Decision-making for an ISS can be broken down to two broad categories – major and minor. This is determined by the impact the decisions have on the bigger strategic direction of the artist moving forward and budgetary considerations. Example of major decisions could be the choice of marketing a single or an album, making a music video or not, choosing a producer or not and so on. Minor decisions maybe things like the font choice on a poster design, small artwork considerations inside the CD package, status update choices in social media etc.,
8.10 Concluding Remarks

The decision making process undertaken by an independent singer-songwriter producing and marketing an album (LP) in the digital age encompasses the transformation of creative ideas into market ready products in a rapidly changing marketing environment.

This exegesis has demonstrated the multi-disciplinarian skill base demanded of an independent artist. It has explored the creative practice of an independent musician in developing ideas and producing commercial products. This practice relies on creative skills such as songwriting, music performance and music production. It also requires management and interpersonal skills to organise the production process, to direct musical performances and to manage a band and a supporting marketing team. It requires the ability to connect creative music practice with independent music marketing practices.

A lack of formal training or skills in marketing can create serious limitations for independent musicians who may not have the budget to outsource these skills. When organising musical projects it is important that an independent musician needs to go beyond financing a music production and allocate necessary funding toward its promotion and distribution to increase the probability of some success in terms of sales and exposure. Additionally it is ideal that an independent musician can allocate sufficient time to push the project in the absence of formal management.

Despite the new opportunities presented by the digital age, the music business remains inherently risky. An ISS can reduce the level of personal commercial risk by embedding commercial considerations within the creative development of musical works. For an independent musician wanting commercial success in the music industries it requires the ability to develop necessary technological skills to save money by producing music in home studio environments but also to develop and manage digital marketing tools such as websites, social media, and email marketing systems. Other skills include the ability to
perform graphic design and also engaging in music video production to support artist brand objectives.

This practice-based research project demonstrates that commercialising creative musical works is a demanding occupation, that requires long hours and significant monetary investments for an uncertain financial return. For many independent musicians it can prove to be overwhelming. Issues of self-confidence, lack of sufficient time and funds, lack of motivation and also necessary marketing and business skills can combine to undermine the likely success of an independent music release. However those that can embrace their creative prowess, their online presence and independent music marketing practice, and can transcend any conflicts between creativity and marketing, will be more empowered to gain a competitive advantage in the new digital music industries.
Appendices

Appendix 1  - Creative Portfolio Item 1: Album ................................................................. 172
Appendix 2  - Creative Portfolio Item 2: Media Kit ......................................................... 173
Appendix 3  - Creative Portfolio Item 3: Website and social media links .... 177
Appendix 4  - Creative Portfolio Item 4: Music Video Links ................................. 178
Appendix 5  - Creative Portfolio Item 5: Promotional Posters .............................. 179
Appendix 6   Blog Excerpt ............................................................................................. 181
Appendix 7   Album Review Examples ......................................................................... 184
Appendix 8   Artist positioning examples .................................................................... 186
Appendix 1 - Creative Portfolio Item 1: Album
Digital album available for streaming at: https://cheynnemurphy.bandcamp.com/album/a-horse-called-freedom-firesongs-for-the-soul-series-iii
Appendix 2  - Creative Portfolio Item 2: Media Kit

Item 2a: Artist Biography

**Artist Biography**

Cheynne Murphy

After discovering three chords and the ‘truth’ in his final year at university, Cheynne dropped the security blanket of his corporate marketing career to his parents’ dismay, pursuing something far more meaningful at the time…the love of music and the dream of fame and glory. With no previous musical training he started a naïve journey of creative self-discovery and to his surprise, three years later negotiated and secured a worldwide songwriting deal with Warner Chappell, as well as two live performances on national television and national radio airplay on Triple J and Triple M. Drum media called the rock album he penned with his band Wingspan in 2000 as: ‘ambitious orchestral rock with rare song-writing genius’. A star was rising. Or was it? Record deal scams, band breakups, management breakdowns and financial desolation had Cheynne running for the rolling green foothills of Byron Bay where he resettled on a farm in the tiny Possum Creek village near Bangalow. Inspired by his 12 string acoustic guitar, country living, Neil Young and the arrival of his two young children, Cheynne invested in a new musical journey set against a rural vista and the simplicity of the fireside, family, and friends.

He recorded his debut solo EP ‘Firesongs For the Soul’ in 2008 and showcased this in the company of giants at the 20th Anniversary of the Bluesfest in 2009. He followed this up with a second EP, ‘Spaces In-between’ that Rhythms Magazine (2011) described as ‘a big warm sprawling folk rock record, unpretentiously earnest’. It was volume II in the Firesongs for the Soul series and was recorded in Cheynne’s beach shack in South Golden Beach just north of Byron Bay with just a couple of microphones, a laptop, and a bunch of friends who he says: ‘were lured in with the promise of wine and baked dinners’. As Cheynne recalls he had reconnected to the spirit of what music and collaboration was all about: ‘Music has always been an innocent pursuit for me. It’s been a constant companion and song-writing is a balm for my soul. I felt I had got ‘corrupted’ by the machinations of the music industry and became affected by the pursuit of career and what others thought. The Firesongs for the Soul concept was a coming home to personal authenticity once again’. Cheynne won a North Coast Music Industry Award, as well as numerous finalist nominations for both EP’s, as well as substantial community radio airplay. After listening to a poem on ABC radio, the lyric Burnished Gold resonated and looking toward the hills of the Burringbar range a new song and album was seeded. A new band was also taking shape and a classic folk rock sound was forming. The groundwork had been laid for Cheynne’s most accomplished creative work to date, the debut LP: A Horse Called Freedom (Firesong For the Soul series Vol III). (See Media Release)

**FAST FACTS**

- **Born:** Nowra, NSW, Australia
- **Lives:** South Golden Beach, Byron Shire, Australia
- **Credits:**
  - Worldwide publishing deal – Warner Chappell/Alberts
  - Radio airplay – JJJ, 2SER, MMM, ABC Regional / Radio National/
  - Community Radio (4 in charts for Spaces In Between single)
  - North Coast Music Industry Award (Dolphin Award 2009), Multiple nominations
  - Musicoz finalist

- **Festivals:** Bluesfest, Fatherhood Festival, Bangalow song-writers festival, Neurum Creek folk festival
- **Supports:** Pete Murray/Tex Perkins /Jeff Martin / Epicure
- **Venues:** The Zoo /QPAC (Brisbane), Annandale Hotel, The Basement, The Hopetoun Hotel, The Roundhouse, UNSW bar, Excelsior, Cat and Fiddle etc (Sydney), The Espy (Melbourne), Transit (Canberra)

- **Past Reviews:**
  - “Something special” Beat Magazine
  - "Rare song-writing genius" Drum Media
  - “A big, warm,sprawling, folk-rock...unpretentiously earnest” Rhythms Magazine

**Contact:** info@cheynemurphy.com, CMI Records: 0433310371
Item 2b: Media Release

Date: July 21, 2014
Presented by: CMI Records
Re: Cheynne Murphy Album Release: A Horse Called Freedom (August 30, 2014)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Horse Called Freedom – finding the warrior within

Modern life has its own challenges. Whilst we no longer roam the prairies hunting for food and seeking protection from nature and warring tribes, we face other equally demanding trials and tribulations. Today’s warrior may not display the painted faces of the past, but the resemblance is perhaps carried on the inside. “We are all warriors of a kind and have our own battles to face” says folk alt-country rocker Cheynne Murphy who is launching his debut album “A Horse Called Freedom”, Saturday August 30, at the Courthouse hotel in Mullumbimby, in Northern NSW. This is Cheynne’s first release in three years and one that has been quite a journey in the making considering he has 8 jobs, 4 children in a blended family, over 150 students and a litany of life aspects to manage. Managing these many roles is par for the course for many of us. “Every 12 string juggling work, passion, finance, lifestyle, family, technology – modern day life demands warrior like qualities. I believe we are ultimately on a quest for freedom and a more peaceful, fulfilled way of being” says Cheynne.

Cheynne moved to the North Coast in 2008 and debuted his first solo EP, Firesongs For The Soul, at Bluesfest in 2009. With some north coast music industry awards under his belt with this release, Cheynne then recorded the second EP “Spaces In Between”, described by Rhythm Magazine as a “big warm, sprawling folk rock, unpretentiously earnest”. The groundwork had been laid for an album release which began with the song Burnished Gold after Cheynne heard the phrase in a poem on radio. As he recalls: “I had been working with a concept called ‘Firesongs For The Soul’ for my EP’s which focused on the fire as a source of healing, community gathering as well as a musical sharing, using acoustic instruments and harmonies. When I heard the Burnished Gold lyric it struck me visually. I saw embers and flames as well as the shades of gold a surfer sees through waves. It also feels timeless and evoked American Indian imagery which in turn inspired other songs on the album.”

The albums recording became the focus of a Masters of Arts research project in Shane’s (the legal spelling of his name) other life, where he teaches music business and arts marketing at Southern Cross University and SAE Byron Bay. This involved documenting all the decisions of an independent artist from conception to marketing a final music product. “It feels like such an inspiring way to learn. The recording project helps me document the marketing roadmap that I hope will be useful to others following a similar path. There is so much opportunity in the digital world but also much confusion. I want to get these things clear myself then one day release a book plotting the journey of this music”. Joining forces with ex-301 engineer and producer Paul Pilsneniks (Pete Murray, Angus Stone, Powderfinger, Jeff Martin), and with a new band to boot, Cheynne has recorded a rich, emotive folk rock album with hints of alt-country, largely the influence of long time guitarist Toby Andrews. For the title Cheynne drew on the Richard Harris movie he watched as a young boy with his dad, ‘A Man Called Horse’. It depicts a cowboy captured and assimilated into an Apache Indian tribe. This indigenous imagery and symbolism integrates with the modern warrior and the emotional endurance required by life today. The album is a conceptual journey of someone coming to terms with the balance of life and the rapidity of change. It also deals with the losses we may face along the way – people close to us, our possessions, or even the loss of our own personal identity. As Cheynne shares: “My own experience of parenting has been confronting in many ways. So demanding at times that I can lose myself in the multitudes of needs that always seem to be arising.” Enter the mythical horse called freedom, representing a more elevated perspective on how to best face the ordeals of life.

Cheynne doesn’t place himself as a country artist but is inspired by the spirit of country. “I draw on nature, rustic imagery and also a deep connection with the ocean. Surfing really helps me cope with the demands of a complex life”. The end recording is warm with layered harmonies, framed by the resonant chime of Cheynne’s trusty old Maton 12 string and driven by a classic 4 piece band sound featuring Mat Akehurst and Maurice Cernigoi on drums and bass respectively and Toby Andrews on electric guitar. Matt Bone from Starboard Cannons also guests on bass on the recording. The Cheynne Murphy band is showcasing the album at Mullumbimby Courthouse, Saturday August 30 with supports by Walrus and the Carpenter and Rich Latimer. You can purchase a pre-release CD and ticket for just $12 at www.cheynnemurphy.com.

END RELEASE
Contact: CMI Records, info@cheynnemurphy.com, 0423310371
Item 2c: Photography

Horizontal Band Media Shot

Vertical Solo Media Shot
Item 2d: Cover letter example

Wordpress

To: ABC North Coast
Re: BURNISHED GOLD

Hi Bill,

I am a frequent listener of ABC regional radio on the North coast (Coast FM, ABC North Coast). I like the format and song playlists. In fact the song I am promoting was written after listening to a poem being read on ABC Coast FM.

I have also been interviewed a couple of times on Mary Lou’s program on Coast FM as well as Bonita Brown (ABC Illawara). I am currently trying to promote a song BURNISHED GOLD for ABC airplay. It is the first single from my new independent album "A Horse Called Freedom" out August 18, 2014. I am also a masters student and the album is part of this work (details and bio at http://www.cheynemurphy.com/). I am available to chat about this on 0423310371. What I would really like is some kind of spot airplay/rotation for the track because I genuinely think its good enough, its local and in the spirit of independence, I need all the help I can get :-)

I have a marketing plan to promote the record and perform regularly on the North Coast.

I know that I can contact programmers/stations individually for spot airplay, however with your support it would be an enormous boost to my campaign.

I would appreciate your thoughts on the song BURNISHED GOLD. Description: Haunting folk rock ballad with all-country influences

You can stream it direct at:
Soundcloud: https://soundcloud.com/cheynemurphy/burnished-gold

Or download a high quality 320kps MP3 here: https://www.hightail.com/download/IZUxvFVHnHS11F3skJIUQw

Or download a high quality Wav file here: https://www.hightail.com/download/IZUxvFVHnHS11F3skJIUQw

Any feedback would be welcomed.

Looking forward to your reply.

Cheyne
Appendix 3 - Creative Portfolio Item 3: Website and social media links

Item 3a: Artist Website

www.cheynnemurphy.com

Item 3b: Social Media Links

www.youtube.com/cheynnemurphy

https://instagram.com/cheynnemurphy/

https://twitter.com/cheynnemurphymusic

http://cheynnemurphy.tumblr.com/
Appendix 4  - Creative Portfolio Item 4: Music Video Links

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtU2LjCUJYk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jN1TdGl7nEo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2nAWMsF5bw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auO-j6tiS54
Appendix 5  - Creative Portfolio Item 5: Promotional Posters

Item 5a: Venue Poster

“big, warm, sprawling folk rock – unpretentiously earnest”
– RHYTHMS MAGAZINE –

EPs and album available at www.cheynnemurphy.com
Item 5b: Launch Poster

CMI Records Presents:

Cheynne Murphy
A Horse Called Freedom
CD Launch

Saturday, Aug 30
Courthouse Hotel, Mullum
7:30 Start

Featuring:
Cheynne Murphy Band
Supported by:
Walrus and The Carpenter
and Rich Latimer

Tickets: $10, or $15 with CD
Presale: $12 for a ticket and CD at:
www.cheynnemurphy.com
This album documents a journey of the soul for me. Into new territory. An exploration of the inner world through music and the outer world through metaphorical landscapes. It is in essence a concept album that had its genesis upon listening to a poem being read out on ABC radio that had the striking visual lyric ‘burnished gold’. My first musical projects embodied a concept called ‘Firesongs For the Soul’ so that lyric evoked the flame but also the way the sun lights up the back of the wave in the early morning, how the fronds of a palm shield and reveal a golden light, the setting sun...its everywhere. It seeped into my consciousness. At the time I was driving back from my work in my day job as a marketing lecturer that I like... but is not quite as inspiring to me as music and song-writing is. Burnished gold took me somewhere that day and as I looked out the window passing the beautiful sun-drenched hills near Murwillimbah a haunting melody struck me in three part harmony and the song had begun to write itself. It took me quite literally to ‘a time long ago’. Lost in the canyons, almost like a lost cowboy on some kind of shamanic journey after stumbling into a tribe of American Indians...falling in love with them, nature and a raven haired woman. This song had some very interesting variations rhythmically and after much experimentation I settled into the unusual 6 /8 to 4/4 feel which in a way can be disorientating but strangely harmonious simultaneously.

The song burnished gold is written in a minor key (capo on the second fret) and I began the realization that where I was at spiritually was often best reflected in the deeper mournful yearning of minor keys and in fact at a certain point I had surrendered to the idea of writing an album completely in the minor realm. In the past I had always thought people would like to be uplifted through music and this uplifting lends itself through major or as music teachers often call it ‘happy’ chords. Music that makes you want to dance. But I was being led by something different. I wanted to create some kind of concept album which begins in the more melancholic ruins of self discovery but leads the listener or writer on a journey that faces the inner shadow squarely and hopefully leads them to a more relaxed space and acceptance of ‘what i is’. Back tracking now...

The journey begins with Back At the Start. It was inspired by a brief encounter with a radiant little baby, peering over his mothers shoulder...such innocence and joy. I reflected on this innocence and how we are conditioned by parents firstly and then society, and are filled with preconceptions and ideas that may or may not be true but we somehow become confused in our identity and some of us turn to drugs or therapy to unravel this conditioning. I see it like a helmet or uniform that we are told to wear. I then thought of my 4 grand parents that passed away in nursing homes. My Irish Grandad in particular had an interesting journey with Alzheimers and during my monthly visits he eventually forgot who I was or indeed his own wife. However he did seem rather happy and by all accounts he was content, smiling and loved his food. He was even known to wander the local streets in search of....who knows. In some respects he was almost turning into a baby again hence the title Back at the Start. The heart has some kind of guidance system,
some kind of purity, and 'if it comes from the heart you'll be back at the start again'...back to a more innocent approach to life.

So in track 1, Back At the Start we contemplate the corruption of innocence by unwanted rules and conditioning that are designed to order us but may in fact constrain our freedom. Burnished Gold (Track 2) looked at the old worlds and tribes and their connection to nature which are ‘signs like a roadmap, always knowing where to go’. But our path can unravel unpredictably and we can sometimes face loss and devastation. Until its Gone (Track 3) is a contemplation that often “we don’t really know how good it is until its gone”. Originally inspired by the death of the brother of one of my closest friends who has indigenous heritage, I used this as a metaphor for an American Indian warrior dealing with the grief of the death of his own brother and feeling his presence, sitting by the fire, hears his brothers totem animal the coyote ... “wild cries in the distance’ your animal songs”. This song traverses minor sadness and lifts up in the chorus almost as a revelation to honour what we have hear and now. The alto or end is the acceptance. I have played music at many funerals and see these as a celebration of one’s life but wonder about the irony that this happens after they are gone?

The title track of the album (track 4) follows, as this warrior, whom ambiguously may be of modern times or from the old world, is searching for “A Horse Called Freedom”. Not sure if I was unconsciously affected by an old movie I saw with my Dad called ‘A man called horse’ or the desert chill of Horse with No Name by America. This lyric is a metaphor for finding freedom within. My personal journey of living in a blended family with my two children and my partner’s two children has been emotionally challenging. Combine this with 5 jobs and still a burning desire to keep writing and recording musical ideas, I sometimes feel like a warrior albeit misguided at times. This journey is not free from darkness and the emotional upheaval of my own difficult upbringing (family of 4, a very strict father and all the conflicts apparent in the interrelationships - N.B dad has since mellowed like a bottle of red wine god bless him x). Interactions in my own day to day experiences can trigger these old wounds. This leads the warrior to paint his face, embodying his shadow. Removed from society, somewhere in the mountains, with the threat of rain, a metaphor for inner isolation and the emotional storms that can plague us. Throughout this isolation there are glimpses of this mythical white horse (also represented in the album artwork). Glimpses of a freedom that can lift the spirit beyond these sometimes chaotic worldly concerns onto a more elevated plateau.

The album’s central character re-enters society in ‘Must Start Moving’ (Track 5) but on the fringes only. Wandering with just a dog as a companion he finds deep solace in the solitude of loneliness and turns his gaze once more back to nature and its infinite support. The theme here for the character is not to get stuck. Not dwell unnecessarily in emotional confusion but to stay grounded. He ‘Must keep moving’.

This theme is continued with Tears for the Road (Track 6) where a soul is dealing with the tremendous grief of losing his family in the Victorian bushfires. He couldn’t save them and watched them be burned alive. Horrifying. To tell someone to just move on would be disrespectful to them so instead the song...
explores how grieving can be like leaving 'tears for the road' (Track 6) which can lead you to a lighter space. It is also touches on the journey from one place to another.

Thus we enter a transition from the dark into the light where in track 8 "good feelings will guide you to a home". A metaphor for the inner home of knowing yourself and contacting your own inner power and strength and ability to self-nurture. The song is also an exploration of manifestation whereby the intuition is expressed by genuine good feelings which if you choose this method of guidance may lead you towards self-actualisation. It is also an honouring of family and its role in the bigger picture.

Now as the transformation is near complete, the wounded warrior with the 'broken wings' meets the mythical Firebird (Track 8) who becomes a spiritual healer and teaches him to 'fly again'. This is similar to the rising phoenix that according to Greek mythology, is a long-lived bird that is cyclically regenerated or reborn. After writing the song I was present at a ceremony where an indigenous leader from Australia was passing on a Black cockatoo feather to another man of Hawaiian descent as a peace offering and a sacred symbol of the environment to 'spread' the word. He relayed the story that his people called the black cockatoo a firebird as well as the bearer of rain and it is very lucky to be 'dropped' one of these feathers. I actually wrote the song as Fireburn but my lovely step daughter Arianna thought I said Firebird so it stuck. It is interesting when you let go of the conscious mind what can come through. Now our character is transforming, lightening and moving through into modern times.

So We Can See (Track 9) looks at the pressure of day to day living. We can all 'crack like thunder'. It also looks at how long term relationships can lead to the drifting apart 'phase' through the mundane, the familiar, as we are 'moving along like trains in the night with rattles and aches, and there’s splinters of light'. This metaphor draws on the themes of ships in the night which may arise from a lack of quality time spent together, which in turn can create unwanted friction. Again pointing 'back to the start', this quest for peace and liberation may require a connection to a greater spirit or power who can 'strip us of the dark, so we can see'. It also looks at the humanistic aspect of spirituality where each one of us can 'light a candle' for the other 'so we can see'.

In the End (Track 10), we need not take it all so seriously, so as the painful process of the metamorphosis ends and the butterfly emerges from the cocoon we can move into that peaceful, breezy, connected space that dwells somewhere within the moment. Written at a Corroboree near Casino, I was by a rushing stream, like vagrant, a wayfarer, watching the children swim and play free from the shackles of technology and Facebook. It is also inspired by a great book called Siddhartha by Herman Hesse whose journey of hedonism ultimately leads him to a life of simplicity by the river.

So as this first part of my journey ends.....another begins
Northern NSW local Cheynne Murphy delivers on the promise of his two EPs with a debut album that focuses on earnest singing and songcrafting. Remaining firmly within the boundaries of contemporary roots-rock, Murphy isn’t aiming at breaking new ground. He’s simply presenting the sounds and ideas as he hears them in his head with the help of some adroit playing from the likes of guitarist Toby Andrews, bassists Maurice Cernigoi and Matt Bone and drummer Mat Akehurst.

The album peaks early with smouldering centrepiece ballad, ‘Burnished Gold’, showcasing the shimmering production and instrumentation (consistent throughout the entire album). While Murphy occasionally wanders into prosaic territory lyrically, the arrangements and performances are accomplished and should appeal to fans of the Powderfinger and Pete Murray school of song based rock. *Martin Jones*

The first full-length release from Byron Bay’s Cheynne Murphy, *A Horse Called Freedom* is a narrative record of sorts, loosely charting the travails and epiphanies of an introspective everyman as he makes his way in the world. Produced and engineered by Paul Pilsneniks (Angus Stone, Powderfinger) and featuring Matt Bone of Starboard Cannons on bass, *A Horse Called Freedom* is the evolutionary endpoint in a process begun with EPs *Firesongs For the Soul I* and *II*. Cheynne has embraced a full band here, and the resulting sound is true to the spirit of acts such as Crosby Stills Nash & Young, and America. Across the record, Cheynne engagingly clothes the meat and bones of a folk animal with the skin of a rock beast, pulling together folk-like lyrics, gentle percussion, and frequently chiming lead guitar to gently soaring effect. At once ambling and cinematic, the nostalgic ‘Burnished Gold’ is a wistful tale of a cowboy encountering a beautiful maiden (‘there’s an echo in the canyon from a time long ago…’), while ‘Until It’s Gone’ is a portrait of loss painted in ashes, overgrown wildflowers, and misty rain. Title track ‘A Horse Called Freedom’ is inspired by the mythology of the First Americans, and combines uniquely Australian imagery with a building blues-rock mix: ‘I see a black cockatoo cross the sky, I’m gonna move my camp up a little higher.’ While his lyrics are consistently engaging, Cheynne is at his best when giving flight to an engaging vocal hook scaffolded by a pop-informed rock arrangement (‘Firebird’, ‘Good Feelings’). An impressive debut that captures a strong sense of movement and reflection. *Gareth Hipwell*
Classic Aussie folk rock – soulful stories backed with big acoustic guitars, uplifting melodies, driving rhythms, and tasty guitar work.

In the tradition of other timeless homegrown artists – from Paul Kelly to Pete Murray, the Black Sorrows to the Waifs...catchy, original and unmistakably Australian.

Source: Fender Australia

AUSTRALIAN songwriter Murphy knows music can be a tough game: He threw in a corporate career to pursue his music and after signing an international publishing deal saw it all come crashing down. He found peace in the foothills of Byron Bay while teaching university students about the pitfalls of the biz. His rediscovered love of songwriting has resulted in this 10-track album, which reveals a mature folk-rock style with a tight band including his long-time guitarist Toby Andrews. Lyrically, the focus is on surviving to fight another day in a philosophical song cycle which celebrates the joys of a simpler life. Subtext: you better do this because you love it, because it can tear you apart. Burnished Gold is one of the best tracks with its imagery of an old coin uncovered in a canyon and the title tune takes inspiration from the warrior imagery of the Richard Harris film A Man Called Horse. Elsewhere some overused metaphors slip through, but songs like Good Feelings, a powerful folk-rock track with sighing harmonies and evocative guitar from Andrews, show how deep the fire still burns.

Noel Mengel
Appendix 8  Artist positioning examples

*Artist One-two line Description*

An Australian folk-rocker with alt-country influences. Debuting Bluesfest 2009, Cheynne traverses a gritty, evocative, acoustically driven soundscape, with layered harmonies, moody country-infused electric guitar, and lyrically exploring the spiritual dimensions of being human.

*Album positioning: A Horse Called Freedom*

A haunting emotive folk rock album with alt-country influences. Rich and layered with harmonies, warm acoustic guitars, and moody electric ambient soundscapes, A Horse Called Freedom is an album that moves in mood from the shadows into the light. Inspired by images of an old Richard Harris movie he watched with his Dad, ‘A Man Called Horse’ (which had depicted a cowboy captured and assimilated into an American Indian apache tribe), Cheynne drew on this indigenous imagery and symbology, integrating these themes with what defines the modern day warrior and the universal quest for freedom. Musically whilst there are alt-country influences (brought out largely by the influences of Cheynne’s long time guitarist Toby Andrews), there are also elements of Cheynne’s distant rock past and a folk element brought about by the dominance of 12 string guitar in the sound. Cheynne doesn’t place himself as a country artist but acknowledges that he is inspired by the spirit of country: “I like to draw on nature, rustic imagery and also a deep connection with the earth via the ocean and surfing”. Musically it moves from harmony rich, acoustic rock ballads, through to blues and alternative country carrying elements of a folk and pop sensibility.

*Individual Song Positioning (For Radio)*

Radio programmers also like these one-line tags on songs.

Some examples are:

1. **Back At the Start**: Uplifting acoustic rock ballad, with layered chorus harmonies and a pop sensibility, exploring the conditioning process from birth, the corruption of innocence and the journey back to innocence in old age

2. **Burnished Gold**: Haunting folk rock ballad lost somewhere in the canyons and an American Indian past life
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