

The Music Industry

Thursday, 04 July 2019

A recent visit to the AWAL offices in London illustrated to me how much the industry has changed over the past couple of decades. As did my trip to Midem in Cannes.

Weâ€™ve been with AWAL since 2005, very early in their existence. I decided my catalogue needed to be represented digitally and wanted the past hits by myself, Genesis, 10cc and others, as well as successes like The Rocky Horror Show, to have royalties collected and monies earned paid.

AWAL has done a pretty good job for us over the past 15 years. But we needed to upgrade the service.

Likewise, in Midem, I required a new Administrator for my publishing company Jonjo Music. Since the 1960s weâ€™ve had enormous success, with our several associated companies representing such magnificent artistes as Abba, through Bocu, who administered Jonjo, and the Zombies.

But Midem was a tragic disappointment. Iâ€™ve been attending since the very first event, when I flew back in the next airplane seat to another young hopeful singer, Diana Ross, and had a long conversation with the delightful lady. Very few publishers or labels were represented this year. The town remembered those happy days when Music dominated the world and the event was in January. Now, in June, it has been totally overshadowed by the Film Festival, before it, and the Advertising industry, Lions, just after it. Cannes empties for Midem.

Iâ€™ve placed Jonjo with CTM, a brilliant publishing conglomerate based in Holland (which I love; my companies were founded there). My old friend Roger Greenaway raves about the job they have done for his songs, they look after the catalogue of the greatest all time pop singer Roy Orbison and all my contacts in the publishing world say they, along with Peer Music, are the two best homes for songs in the world. CTM anticipates making millions for Jonjo (and themselves) with my vast back catalogue.

They were amazed to discover, through ASCAP and BMI, that I sang on over 40 million tracks sold through the years, ranging from Everyoneâ€™s Gone To The Moon via Una Paloma Blanca and Johnny Reggae to several versions under different names like The Bay City Rollers (I sang 13 of the 14 vocals on their first hit, my produced Keep On Dancing), It Only Takes A Minute, Sugar Sugar and many more.

But seeing the hundreds of kids sitting in front of screens in the huge AWAL/Kobalt offices brought home to me how times have changed. Every month I get a statement from AWAL - it is 400 pages long with around 100 titles on each sheet. Last month saw Spotify plays on Seagulls - a flop of mine from the 1960s which I did perform on Top of the Pops. In Singapore one elderly (I presume) fan had played it a dozen times. I earned 1p.

But they mount up, these global spins. My monthly four figure cheque is in pounds, not pennies.

And the biggest audience of all is the older music lover, now scattered around the globe, streaming like crazy. Ignore the One Directions, K Pop and Sheeran fans. Yes they are millions but a tiny tip of the iceberg.

Streaming pays pennies. Not even that. But it has taken over from Downloads.

Those of us lucky enough to have back catalogues can earn fortunes. What used to be radio and TV dominated

performance monies have been replaced by much smaller but far wider ranging income and companies like AWAL, collecting more and more efficiently, are cleaning up.

We were AWAL's biggest clients 15 years ago. These days, they tell me, unsigned acts can make £100,000 a year with virtually nobody having heard of them. Just check out Glastonbury this year.

I really liked the AWAL people; enthusiastic, respectful, energetic. I didn't like to tell them; I started all this. Back in 2011 I helped my friend Alex Day get into the Top Five that Christmas with Forever Yours, showing him how he could do it without a Publisher or Label or Plugger. He made about £450,000 from one hit single and began the You Tube phenomenon which culminated in Bloggers and VLoggers dominating charts.

In 1999 Eric Nicoli, then Boss of EMI, had asked me to become Global Chairman. I gave him a blueprint including starting our own Internet TV and radio station.

Sadly that all came to nothing as I fell foul of the False Allegations Industry, in its early days (my appeal against my 2001 wrongful conviction is ongoing, greatly assisted by my 2018 acquittals).

But I foresaw and intended to bypass the problem. Downloading, Streaming, You Tube and the rest were, and are, brilliant at catering for the fans of certain artistes. And there will always be enough of those to fund small, happy careers. But not enough to fund huge corporate investment.

Only the profits from enormous, mass appeal acts and hits can do that.

And there is nothing currently around to provide a service reaching those, not interested enough to search out music but who can be seduced if only you can find them. Only Adele and Sheeran have really accomplished that.

Spotify and the streamers can give you the music you want but you have to care enough to look for them. Nothing caters for those wanting to be charmed by superb sounds but without the inclination to look for them.

That will be the next big thing.

An internet service which people love, for other reasons, but which alerts them to great cross over music. If I was younger I'd invent it.