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ABSTRACT.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine and scrutinize the traditional and contemporary role of an Artist and Repertoire manager/executive in the music industry. Why? Because there is an aridity of information on the subject. This has led to an abounding deficit of understanding concerning the power of this gatekeeper, who it could be said can make the difference between ‘busking’ in Leicester Square or playing at Wembley Stadium et al.

Using an existing framework and methodology, this dissertation will employ a variety of academic, literary, journalistic and original oral testimony by A&R executives, to illustrate the heterogeneous quality of this important industry role.

Drawing parallels from the various bodies of knowledge that surround an A&R executive, this critical analysis reveals orthodoxies and machinations typical of the role. Furthermore, it will demonstrate, in theory, a basic understanding of A&R and reveals sociological structures such as empiricism and capitalism, questions the threat of the internet and considers A&R responsibility in a broader frame of globalization.

In conclusion this dissertation introduces a fresh and original subject to cultural, sociological and media studies and paves the way for further research in this field.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is three-fold. Firstly is to demonstrate that Artist & Repertoire¹ is an important and certainly neglected area of research within the literature of media and communication studies. Secondly is to illustrate and characterize both the historical and contemporary role of A&R examining technique and status within the increasingly global entertainment industry. Thirdly the study analyses some of the factors and constraints under which A&R operates, and reviews the Internet as a contributory factor to the assessment of this crucial industry role.

After the introduction the reader is offered a thorough explanation of methodology used to obtain the data. The methodology is post structuralist in essence or as Gayatri Spivak said in Robert Young’s book (1992) “White Mythologies : Writing History & The West”:

‘I am a bricoleur, I use what comes to hand’.

In other words, due to the lack of information available on this subject it has been necessary to carry out two case studies and draw references from any field of knowledge that can offer

a parallel to explain the results of the hypotheses herein. This section will also assess key findings and methodological difficulties pertinent to the research, which has been both qualitative and quantitative, thus ensuring a clearer definition of the role.

Following this the results will establish the beginnings of the role and investigate its development through to the present day. Owing to the originality of this research it has been necessary to adopt a framework in order to demonstrate the fundamentals which could be said to define A&R. Globalist Arjun Appadurai applies a framework to expound one of his theories in his volume "Modernity at Large" using a neologism. 'This is the use of the suffix "scape" which when combined with appropriate prefixes i.e. ethno, media, techno, finance and idea, offers a structure for examining, in his case, global cultural migration. Breaking down these prefixes into five dimensions, using broad terms, he was able to address the movement of people, media perception/manipulation, technology, money and ideas/perceptions around the world. He used this framework as it permitted flexible and fluid space to demonstrate his considered opinion that the world is a continuous flow of movement. Szeman (1997) notes:

"These various 'scapes suggest an alternative spatial rendering of the present, one that is not 'fixed' as a typical landscape might be, but which are of various, disjunctive sizes, amorphous and flowing. They are the 'building blocks.'"

This investigation will reveal in the A&R Perspective that the role is similarly amorphous and multifaceted, which is consequently the reason for applying Appadurai's framework in this dissertation. Other strategic frameworks were taken into consideration such as Porter's 'The nature and Intensity of Competitive Forces' in which he also uses five determinants. However, his and other frameworks are more suitable to corporate methodology and not appropriate for the breakdown of what could be considered a more unusual industry career.

Finally, this chapter will discover from an historical perspective, four A&R men who were catalysts in the redefinition of A&R and the discovery of the 12" single.

Following the results, a review of data collected from oral testimony and music industry publications, regarding Internet technology, is carried out. The point of this analysis is to ascertain how Internet technology may affect the A&R role. This is intended only as a contributory factor to the assessment of the A&R role however it offers an opportunity to discuss a current medium that claims to offer potential fame without the need for A&R.

Finally the conclusion will review evidence gathered from current academic literature, publications and original research, bringing together a focused analysis of a fundamental role, which has up until this point remained largely unresearched. The conclusion also gives serious critique to the overall body of this dissertation, which from the beginning set out to discover three hypotheses:

- (i) How an A&R manager acquires his technique
- (ii) What socio-political environments he embraces
- (iii) Whether the Internet and internationalisation will help or hinder his career.

Ultimately this dissertation will extend to the reader a rare opportunity to discover an industry role that has long been content with anonymity despite the dissent that surrounds it. Furthermore it will serve to academia an opportunity to initiate debate on a powerful

gatekeeper who has yet to be considered as a viable agent worthy of discovery.

As history recounts, an individual namely Emile Berliner², having just invented the gramophone, predicted royalty payments for phonautograms³ and foretold that families would spend whole evenings at home listening to recordings of popular performers. It is doubtful however, that he could have envisaged just how his invention would change the lives of many. The impact of Berliner's original innovation has been so culturally pervasive as to lead Tagg (1982) to estimate that:

"The average Westerner's brain probably spends around twenty five per cent of its lifetime registering, monitoring and decoding popular music."

During the course of perfecting his invention, Berliner stumbled across an individual, namely, Fred Gaisberg⁴ and observed something in him that was to bring them together as a team and indubitably classify Gaisberg as the forefather of talent scouts⁵. Working closely together, Berliner imparted the secrets of his disc record making, in return for Gaisberg's extraordinary ability to find suitable performers with recordable voices.

A decade later Gaisberg was dispatched to London to engineer for The Gramophone Company⁶. This allowed him to travel the world, capturing on record the music of artists in Russia, India and the Far East. Concurrently, he built up the company's classical catalogue, signing and recording important international performers such as Enrico Caruso an Italian Tenor, Nellie Melba an Australian Soprano and Beniamino Gigli another Italian Tenor, thus defining one of the most important roles in the music industry - that of A&R. A tribute to Gaisberg is offered by one of his protégés as Martland (1997) details:

"He was the master of his art, and he had a genius for the industry. He never missed out on a new artist."

Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate the three hypotheses stated in chapter one.

- (i) How an A&R manager acquires his technique
- (ii) What socio-political environments he embraces
- (iii) Whether the Internet and internationalisation will help or hinder his career.

To validate these hypotheses, a pilot study was undertaken to determine the ability to elicit appropriate information. An initial set of questions was drawn up and given to two A&R executives in January 1999. These executives who did not take part in the study were asked to fill in all the questions. They were then interviewed at length about their answers. This exercise realized two case studies and a necessity to include all those who interact with an A&R executive, as seen below. This posed an opportunity to clarify all information gathered to support the hypotheses herein. Also, as a result of the data gathered from these individuals, it concluded that the questions asked would determine the hypotheses herein, therefore the questionnaire remained unchanged.

Participants.

To qualify for participation in the study, the participants had to meet the following criteria:

- (i) Have worked in an A&R capacity for a minimum of 3 years in a recognized record company environment.
- (ii) Have signed an artist. In the case of talent scouts, marketing managers and managing directors the stipulation was:
- (iii) They must have worked closely with an A&R department for at least 5 years.

Total Number Interviewed

Major Record Company A&R	8
Independent Record Company A&R	9
Major Publishing Company A&R	2
Independent Publishing Company A&R	3
Major Record Company Talent Scout	2
Major Record Company Product Manager	2
Major Record Company A&R Coordinator	1
Major Record Company Managing Director	2
Independent Record Company Managing Director	1

A sample of 50 A&R staff were identified through the BPI⁷ website and twenty-three agreed to participate. A reluctance to participate was more apparent with major record company A&R executives, as confidentiality agreements exist in this environment. All were male and aged between 19 and 45 years. Each participant completed a questionnaire and performed in an interview. It is important to note that talent scouts, marketing managers and managing directors did not complete a questionnaire and only took part in open-ended interviews.

Procedure and Rationales.

This investigation used a survey method of research which incorporated a structured questionnaire sent to the participants along with a set of standardized instructions. This was followed up with post-questionnaire interviews which were open-ended. Each interview was allocated one hour. The feedback from each participant was recorded at the bottom of their questionnaire. Following an initial assessment of the group sample, observations showed that the data was in line with the hypotheses. Questions one to four clarifies the criteria for participation in the study. Question five determines how the A&R man acquires his technique i.e. via institutional means or empirical means. Questions six and seven are self-explanatory and serve to demonstrate the idea that A&R tends to rely on tried and tested sources to find talent and has little regard for unsolicited tapes. Question eight highlights personal sacrifice. Questions nine to fourteen are a batch, which collectively elicit data pertaining to the Internet. Question fifteen defines ego and question sixteen highlights arrogance and covert practice. Questions seventeen and eighteen ascertains that A&R does not need to be able to play an instrument or read/write music in order to communicate with his artist. Questions nineteen and twenty gathers information regarding departmental relationships. Question twenty-one determines 'shelf-life' of the A&R executive. Question twenty-two clarifies a recognized

condition in the industry. Question twenty-three discovers the travel map/territory for UK A&R. Question twenty-four determines the importance of image with music. Question twenty-five looks at how an A&R executive sees himself. Question twenty-six shows the extent of A&R input into a new artist. Finally question twenty-seven exemplifies the complete absence of literature on this subject emphasizing the importance of this study. The remaining questions twenty-eight to thirty are self-explanatory. Unfortunately raw data cannot be attached to this dissertation as participants were assured anonymity, therefore it would be unethical to disclose personal details.

Methodological Difficulties

The survey method has in itself certain weaknesses i.e. data analysis. Information gathered from the questionnaires and interviews for this research was in the main, subjective and anecdotal. Problematic as this may be, it is unfortunately the only method we currently have to elude information that facilitates the identification of A&R practice. All research was gathered manually. This was particularly cumbersome during interview as all participants refused to allow recording to take place. Also, ill timing and office distraction occasionally brought some interviews to a halt earlier than desired.

Overall the accumulation of information for this study has been both informative and instructive given the suspicious nature that exists within the industry generally. However, what did come to light by default, yet poignant, was a certain chariness toward academics as A&R executive #5 relates to Craig (1999):

'You just suspect a time and motion study coming on. Academics are as bad as lawyers they have no idea what making music is all about It's not about philosophy or bottom line... .

Coupled with this is heavy workload which denies the A&R executive time to indulge in lengthy conversations. Ultimately, this branch of the music industry would benefit from the opportunity to conduct a descriptive longitudinal research study. This is a non-experimental research design in which the researcher collects data from the same population at more than one point in time. This would declare not just the existing status of A&R phenomena, but also note changes that result from elapsed time, thereby charting the evolution of a gatekeeper who has, up until this point, remained largely untouchable.

The Formal Questionnaire

THE CONTENTS OF THIS FORM ARE ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL. INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE RESPONDENT WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. Do you work for:
 - (a) a major record company
 - (b) an independent record company
 - (c) a major publishing company

(d) an independent publishing company

2. What is your job title?
3. How many years have you worked in your present position?
4. How many bands have you signed?
5. Have you had any formal A&R training?
6. How many demo's do you receive in a week?
7. How many of these do you follow up?
8. How many hours per week do you put into your job?
9. Does your company have a web site?
10. Do you use the internet to search for talent?
11. Do you search UK only or the world?
12. Have you come across a potential signing on the web?
13. Do you see a future where all demo material comes via the internet?
14. Do you see a future where an artist can break using the internet only?
15. Do you consider yourself a tastemaker?
16. Have you ever tampered with one of your artists tracks without them knowing?
17. Can you play a musical instrument?
18. Can you read or write music?
19. What sort of relationship do you have with your marketing department?
20. What sort of relationship do you have with upper management?
21. Is the turnover of A&R staff in your company high or low?
22. Have you ever encountered the term 'burn-out'?
23. Do you travel much outside the UK?
24. How important is an artist's image?
25. Do you think A&R is essential to a band's success?

26. How many of your artists came to you with clear cut ideas and goals?
27. Do you know of any books on A&R?
28. Name
29. Sex
30. Age

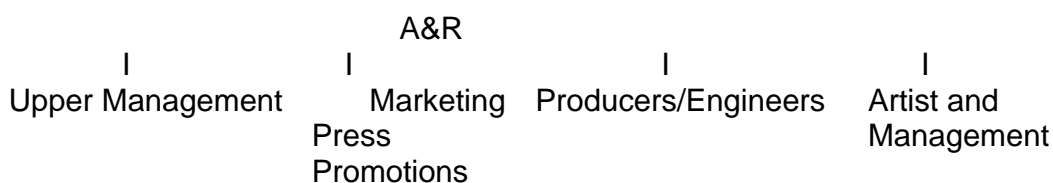
RESULTS

The A&R Perspective.

As already stated in the introduction, this chapter will apply Appadurai's framework to introduce definition which will pertain to five conceptual dimensions, of people, machinery, money, images and ideas in order to explore the A&R perspective from historical times to present day. Although Appadurai's considerations deal with socio-political movements of peoples throughout the world, this discourse will apply his structure to the machinations of the music industry, as a branch of western industrial/cultural capitalism. As an aside, all A&R executives interviewed were guaranteed anonymity therefore numbers had to be allocated to each executive to conceal identity.

Ethnoscapes

Ethnoscapes in this instance should be interpreted as the different categories of people/departments an A&R executive is exposed to, as well as the techniques he applies within those fields. Diagram one below illustrates the departments that A&R interact with on a daily basis.



These departmental interactions will be examined under the headings, internal and external interface.

Internal Interface

The internal interface will analyse relationships between the A&R department and the 'record company machine'⁸ in order to highlight interpersonal tensions and what could be considered covert practice. The contemporary A&R executive interacts with two main departments inside a record company. Marketing,⁹ who control budget spend on promotion, press and production

and Upper management¹⁰ whose power can overturn a marketing decision should the need dictate. History unfortunately offers no evidence to support the idea that Gaisberg et al were subject to this machination within their record companies therefore it is impossible to draw a parallel in this instance.

(a) Marketing

The results of this research has shown that two schools of thought operate within this interface. All A&R executives interviewed for this dissertation revealed a belief, that without an artist and their repertoire, the company has nothing to promote. The marketing department think differently in as much as they consider that A&R do not always get it right and in a lot of cases owe the success of the artist to an ingenious campaign, contrary to the personal experience of A&R executive #3 who explained to Craig (1999):

*“My philosophy is, you’ve got to find em, sign em and break em! if you aren’t responsible or all three, then you haven’t done it... you haven’t broken a band!! - and breaking the act is the hardest of all. You have to keep on top of marketing, guide press and promotions towards a common goal, otherwise they all have different ideas and the act is a mess. These marketing people love to stick their oar in and they always f**k up the artists head that’s why we never let them listen to the demo’s”.*

A quote from Spellman (2000) concurs:

“Tensions and turf battles (especially between A&R and Marketing) have thus become a ‘normal’ part of the record company work climate. A major label president confided to me that when he assumed his post he was astonished to discover how little company departments actually communicated with each other on projects necessitating joint action’.

Contradicting these viewpoints, Linda Valentine once a marketing manager at MCA Universal Records told Craig(2000):

*“Half of the stuff we got was s**t. if the act didn’t have a sense of style or movement, then they were totally boring in interview - we had to make the best of a bad lot generally”.*

The above quotes demonstrate contempt and a certain arrogance leading one to ponder over what negativity could be conjured up in this zone, but that is beyond this remit. However what did emerge via this research, was a story which highlights a reality of covert practice and the A&R/marketing relationship. A&R executive #10 recalls to Craig (1999):

“I’ll never forget IL Naturally I can’t disclose who the people involved were but I had this artist whose fan base I had studied for a while. Anyway I got this idea that we should use a well-known bottle of fizzy pop and alter the label to make it read the artist instead. It was brilliant We had a major hit The drinks company who owned this brand were quick to take up on the free advertising so together we concocted major broadsheet and magazine coverage on how the record company were going to be sued by the drinks company for using their brand. Anyway everybody was happy and we agreed to make a donation to the Nordoff Robbins Foundation as a token gesture -

more press coverage! The drinks company went on to further advertise their brand using the title of the same artist's hit single, which helped us a lot too. Anyway guess who picked up the award at the Music Week Awards - the marketing manager. Standing up there on that stage holding the trophy for an idea that wasn't theirs. It's just crap and it happens all the time. Many people in this game claim the fame it's very common".

(b) Upper Management

Tony Powell once the managing director of MCA Records explained his A&R department's business philosophy to Craig (2000):

"A&R is the face of the company - you have to be seen to be there whether we are interested or not".

This principle thrives through all the major record companies. But it is a principle that takes its toll, as talent scout #2 accounts to Craig (1999):

*"I spend more f**ing time going to see crap bands belonging to the mates of the MD or the A&R Director... it just exhausts me".*

This statement could, in essence, be interpreted as 'cronyism'? Despite these problems, there are some A&R men who take a stand against the system and go so far as to dramatically alter the way the industry works. One individual who changed the face of A&R in the 60's was Sir George Martin.¹¹

In 1964, Martin had a financial disagreement with EMI¹² and left to create an independent production company known as AIR¹³ Studios. He parted company and took most of the in-house producers¹⁴ with him leaving EMI bereft of anyone to manage their artist's careers. Harry (2000) concludes:

'a staggering loss for a company that didn't have the foresight or generosity to pay a modest bonus to the person who had completely transformed their fortunes'.

This appears to be the catalyst as there is no other evidence available to dispute the change. Martin was already so involved with the Beatles, that EMI senior management felt it would be too disruptive to make changes to what was considered a dream team and despite the conflict, agreed Martin should continue to record with them. It was at this juncture that Martin was to create the independent producer who received royalties¹⁵ and EMI was to find staff to mediate between the band and the company machine: thus the separation of the A&R/producer could be considered to be borne. Michael Batory a lecturer and academic at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College would argue that Joe Meek¹⁶ was responsible for being the first producer to collect independent royalties and this may well be true. However Meek was never really considered to be a record company A&R man with artists careers in his charge, this is why this study has focused on Martin as he alone seemed to be responsible for this overall industry change. Martland (1997) reports:

'These structural changes forced long-established British record companies like EMI to adopt a whole range of new ideas and organizational forms.

Martin and his engineers were able to offer the 'finished product'¹⁷ to the record companies, however they retained the Master tapes. This led to profit deterioration within the record companies which in turn provoked internal reorganization. It was from this moment on, that record companies began to hire individuals who did not necessarily have studio experience or musical ability. The requirement was as A&R executive #18 relates to Craig (1999):

'an extensive record collection, a desire to frequent gigs in dungeones [sic] venues, enthusiasm, tenacity and above all a love of music'.

On a different note, political adeptness is an issue that appears to dominate the record company consciousness. An informative word from A&R executive Smith (2000) identifies the personality factor required:

'if you're not in the right camp, you can't be creative at all. You have to be liked. You have to have some freedom. The only way that you can do that is to make sure that your politics are in check. At Atlantic, I stepped on quite a few landmines. By the time I really understood the landscape, it was too late. That really was the downfall of my career at Atlantic. Before you can scout bands, and make records, and set them up, and try to market and promote them, if you're not liked in your company, none of that will happen. There are A&R people out there today who have zero juice inside their company and zero power'.

This statement highlights the empirical path inherent to A&R. Clearly Smith had no formal A&R training. Until recently there were no courses available to the would-be music industry executive. The first to materialize in the UK was a company called Globall8 who established themselves in 1991 and still continue to operate. Speaking with an A&R lecturer there, he explained that most of the students he taught were much more interested in bringing demo tapes forward for his opinion rather than consider a career in A&R. He also complained that no books were available to educate an individual in this forum. Most literature had only token references, therefore he based most of his teaching on his own experiences or that of his colleagues. Interestingly, of the twenty four A&R executives¹⁹ interviewed for this research, 95% had no recognized industry training. The remaining 5% were formally musicians with studio experience or the offspring of music industry parents. When asked their opinion on the courses Global offer, 100% returned a vote of no confidence.

Finally, the pressure to perform seems to be the biggest drive in an A&R department even from an historical perspective, as Martland (1997) indicates:

'coping with what Gaisberg described as 'the anxiety of making records that must keep a branch going for a year'.

Today however, Gaisberg's comment has mutated into provocative rhetoric, as Gorman (1999) reports:

'More than almost any other business sector, the entertainment industry is noteworthy for its rapid turnover of executives. The old saying 'You're only as good as your last hit can be applied as equally to A&R and marketing people, managing directors, vice presidents and chairmen, as it can to pop stars'.

The pressure to find successful artists, coupled with this antagonistic derision contributes to a recognized industry ailment - 'burnout'. Evans et al (1999) identify this condition as follows:

'Burnout is a word coined in the mid 1970s, and its use as a description for 'physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and interpersonal exhaustion' became popular in the 1980s as a by-product of contemporary research into job stress'.

The late nights, alcohol, drug consumption²⁰ and pressure to perform could be considered to parallel that of the artists themselves as Evans et al (1999) again identifies:

'Burnout also occurs as a result of sheer pressure spread over a few hectic years. Overwork stress from schedules most people would consider ridiculous: up at 7.30pm, travelling in the morning, afternoon rehearsal, sound check in the late afternoon then evening concert and not in bed before midnight That may be a good day - some tour schedules are worse still and we haven't yet mentioned recording sessions'.

Similar to the artist, an A&R manager is required to travel extensively within his territory, attend showcases, sound checks, rehearsals, clothes fittings, studio recordings and mastering of the records and CD's. He is also required to network over lunch and as a talent scout, attend up to 5/6 gigs per night. This is before company meetings, listening to demo tapes and catching up on paperwork. It is also common for an A&R manager to work over the weekend as A&R executive #16 relates to Craig(1999):

'For the last five Saturday nights I've either been out at a cut or a gig. Sometimes I'm away all weekend to either Manchester, Dublin or whatever'.

External Interface

The external interface will discuss the relationship between the A&R executive and the signed or unsigned artist identifying method and dispelling myth.

The A&R executive of yesteryear and today are juxtaposed in as much as they share the same desires to frequent venues sacrificing relationships with their families and friends in the hope of spotting the next big thing. The pioneering

Gaisberg travelled far and wide, interacting with many cultures, broadening his horizons and techniques as he went. Like his contemporaries Martland (1997) writes:

he frequented city bars and theatres at night looking for artists until 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, judging recording potential and the artistic merit of an alien culture.

However during the current economic climate concerning global expansion of the industry, we are witnessing the fragmentation of the need to 'travel for talent' (to reiterate industry speak) and today's A&R manager tends to work mainly within his designated territory - a mere vestige of the adventurous Gaisberg who said Martland (1997) claims:

As we steamed down the channel into the unknown, I felt like Marco Polo starting out on his journeys.

Apart from the late nights and gruelling travel, the role requires dedication and the embracement of artists from all cultures and creeds, who are eager to perform and equally desperate to be noticed. As a consequence this prerequisite takes the A&R executive on a journey through hundreds of individuals, whose musical ability may be considered by him to be either brilliant, average, or in some cases, “tonally challenged”. Hence, the contemporary A&R manager is required to act primarily upon instinct, a perspective this research has demonstrated via the recollection of the early days of Gaisberg, through to the present day. The original talent scout and his contemporary incarnation both apply unorthodox methods to control any given situation.

At this point it becomes necessary to discuss the relationship between the A&R executive and the artist. This interface is documented in a limited amount of literature²¹ but does on occasion demonstrate the volatility of creative genius meeting business acumen. As to why this interface is rarely documented is unknown and to surmise would be too speculative.

As with his contemporaries, Gaisberg also endured difficult moments from an artist, as Martland (1997) writes:

“The Experts²² were hard-working and highly skilled professionals who had to endure technical and artistic difficulties... so bad was an accordion player that we asked him to stop if we paid him 5 Roubles, and bring in someone who could sing. He agreed””.

Echoing Gaisberg’s sentiments is Martin (1971) who said of Pete Best, the Beatles first drummer:

But the basic thing was that I didn’t like his drumming, it wasn’t solid and he didn’t bind the group together. I said to Brian that I didn’t want to use him on the records, although he could do what he liked with him outside the studio, as part of the group, but there was no reason why I shouldn’t use a session drummer No-one was going to know.

In a statement bearing close resemblance to Martin’s, A&R executive #4 explains to Craig (1999):

“I knew we needed to remix the track, but the band were adamant we left it alone. Anyway, I had it remixed behind their backs, we put it out and it was a hit - needless to say when the royalties rolled in they had little to say.

Gaisberg’s, Martin’s and A&R executive #4’s parallel comments are clear indications of unwavering application to a project they intend to record. Moreover, this dogmatic approach has filtered out via bands to the press and the public, creating a cloud of doubt and dissent as well as a degree of animosity and cynical humour generating cartoons and graffiti.

In summary, A&R executive #5 sums up to Craig (1999):

“It’s a thankless job. You spend all the hours’ god sends going to see these god-awful bands. Yer wife is moaning ‘cause yer never home, hotel life is shit and the toilets at these gigs are disgusting. After all the sacrifice, they slate you time and time again, so

the only thing to do is go for the money –just think profit....”

Technoscapes.

This dimension will identify the various formats²³ A&R use to sell music as well as discover the ever growing pressure an executive undergoes as he embarks on his mission to find a multimedia star.

Most formats have come about through either a technological breakthrough or a clever marketing idea²⁴. However, during the course of this research, it emerged that one format, which appeared in the marketplace around the mid 1970's, was neither technological nor marketing led. An observation made by two A&R executive's whilst in the clubs of New York caused them to consider an idea that would alter the course of how music was delivered - the 12" single.

Until the rise of Night Clubs in the early 70's the main purpose of single records was to promote the artist on the radio. The 7-inch format was appropriate for this -a 2 or 3-minute track would transfer well enough to the radio, however ultimately the 7-inch disc proved restrictive in its use. At this time, innovative producers like Norman Whitfield had been experimenting with album tracks producing much longer versions for artists like the Temptations, Eddie Kendricks, Edwin Starr and the Undisputed Truth. Usually the albums would consist of half a dozen 3 to 4 minute tracks and one or two 8 to 12 minute tracks, and these would be heavily orchestrated typically with a long instrumental part before or after the main vocals. Eventually market forces dictated marketing strategy and album tracks were released as singles: either to promote the album or as a result of public demand. This necessitated the double "a" side, consisting of two parts, side one being the vocal and side two being the instrumental. This format failed to fulfil it's potential in the night clubs until some of the more "street wise" DJs started to mix two copies of the same single together in order to get as near as possible to the full versions. Another reason for this practice concerned consumer response; by the time the audience in a club realized that they wanted to dance to a particular track, at only two or three minutes long, there was a good chance it would be over before they had a chance to slip on to the dance floor!

Some companies did release longer versions of singles on one side but the reduction in the size of the groove meant that the sound quality was greatly reduced, usually at the treble and bass ends, hence these did not transfer well to the average disco Sound system. The catalyst for change came as a consequence of the disco floor - the influence the disco had on music sales forced specialist labels to realize that they had to do something to rectify this. Eventually the Cayre's devised an album sized single, which could split the difference between a 7" single and an LP. Funkyflyy (2000) reports:

'The Cayre's²⁶ saw that the mixes heard in clubs were not made available for consumers. This prompted them to create the Salsoul Disco label which would be devoted exclusively to extended disco mixed versions on 12" vinyl, at the time called Giant 45's'. Double Exposure's 'Ten Percent' was the first release. The mix was so hot and did so well, that competing labels started doing the same thing. This was basically the birth of the commercial remix in 1977".

The above reference quite clearly demonstrates A&R challenging technology to create a new

carrier that could handle more than two or three minutes of music; a creative concept that transformed pop music into the global dance market that exists today. Furthermore, the contemporary A&R executive now has to contemplate the increasing proliferation of media output. Currently these include formats as varied as video, CD Rom, DVD, W, books, film and the internet, a veritable multitude of avenues that his artist must be seen to master in order to become mainstream. Consequently satellite TV and the Internet has demolished global borders bringing about an ever growing pressure to produce international sound and vision. This is qualified by Spellman (2000):

'Ideally they want stars who can sing a song, star in a video, perform on stage, act in a movie, write a book, schmooze with TV culture, and if at all possible, develop clothing, perfume and food product lines as well'.

This globalisation of artists may return heavy profits however standardization at this level could in turn lead to cultural imperialism within music. Dr Ron Robin an American History Scholar speaks of internationalisation as a material culture. This could be interpreted as either 'a global standardization' or 'a global industrialization'. What is pertinent to this research is the concept of hegemony within A&R. Sims [n.d.] quotes Dr. Ron Robin's²⁷ concept of hegemony:

'What we are seeing today is not actually a hegemony of American culture, since there is little in that culture that can be called inherently 'American'. What's really happening is an 'internationalisation' of material culture throughout a world that has truly become a global village'.

Today's A&R is under pressure to think in global terms regarding sales, thus strong branding is necessary to capture a global audience. By presenting ideals, A&R sets standards, raising a rhetorical question, 'is A&R ultimately responsible for keeping cultural music alive'?

This brief overview has observed how technology has walked hand in hand with A&R, standing aside only for a moment in history to embrace creativity and bow to the music. But what consequences lie on the horizon? As already stated one possible eventuality is the standardization²⁸ of music on a global scale. This perspective lies at the heart of those critics such as President Sukarno of Indonesia who, in the late 50's, was concerned that his young republic was suffering from what he called a 'cultural invasion'²⁹. He launched an Indonesian identity drive, calling on all artists and musicians to shun western influences and revitalize indigenous art forms, unfortunately it did not produce the results he had hoped for. Certainly as academia takes more interest in the music industry, it is probable that a debate about hegemony in music will grow in significance within future cultural critical discourse as western global distribution of music and strong images continues.

Finanscapes.

This interchange will identify the decisions an executive has to face when confronted with artist budgets. The results of this original research have shown that two strategies are employed - low budget signings and priority signings.

Low budget signings tend to operate on a development deal basis, a singles deal with an option for an album or an album deal in respect of which the company will continue to

exercise options³⁰, because they have faith in the artist. Conversely, priority signings are allocated an almost limitless recording and marketing budget. This is because priority signings tend to stem from senior A&R staff whose status dictates extremely high standards.

Development deals can cover anything from recording maybe three songs to investing a possible £10,000³¹ over a few months, an expensive manoeuvre should the results turn out to be nothing short of pedestrian. Likewise, singles deals are costly referendums presented to the public in a bid to 'test the water' before committing to further release.

To give an idea of expenditure, Albini (2000), offers estimates of the final figures. His figures are in dollars however given the current exchange rate, costs parallel the UK market.

Albini's figures are good approximations of a budget spend³² but his editorial, from which the above table is an excerpt, is aimed more at the exploitation involved. Certainly Albini (2000) is contemptuous towards A&R as he states:

"The A&R person is the first person to make contact with the band, and as such is the first person to promise them the moon. Who better to promise them the moon than an idealistic young turk who expects to be calling the shots in a few years, and who has had no previous experience with a big record company. Hell, he's as naive as the band he's duping."

Although Albini takes issue about the amount of money siphoned from an artist generally, there are those who would place budget overspend firmly at the feet of A&R. The apparent pressure to produce a hit brought about a principle that dominated A&R departments in the '80's as A&R executive #10 recalls to Craig (2000):

"It's had to be right no matter what the cost".

A&R executive #23 highlights to Craig (2000) the cost of exercising this freedom:

"He was in the hole for a million. Five bands, no hits and down a mill, [sic] we had to let him go".

Consequently creative judgment is not as valuable as the amount of record sales he achieved. An exception to the rule is the A&R executive who has one success and then goes on to have a stream of failures. This research revealed two such executives who held prominent A&R positions in the 1980's both responsible for squandering somewhere in the region of two million pounds before being removed from position. These individuals are still A&R executives although not with major record companies. Ultimately, the figures on the bottom line count and current global expansion has caused mergers and downsizing bringing to the fore an A&R bête noir - the lawyer and accountant as evidenced once again by Spellman (2000):

"The enthronement of lawyers and accountants often resulted in a general decline of creative direction in the larger record companies".

After the 80's boom³² came a decline in sales causing record companies to draw in their purse strings. Legal and Finance took over the helm and began to introduce industry

machinations into the remit of the then considered maverick A&R.

A quote from A&R executive #5 to Craig (1999) concludes:

“to ask creative people who are trying to make the best record ever to think about the bottom line is typical of a suit who has no understanding of the creative genius”.

Or, as A&R executive #21 deliberates to Craig (1999):

“Its becoming like the civil service...there are very few characters around any more. The whole industry is run by lawyers and accountants, now what’s that going to do to creativity

This perspective is certainly one possible eventuality, however one only has to look to the charts in 1999 and see that some great new talent has emerged in defiance of pop. Again this discussion has provided an overview which necessitates further investigation particularly in relation to the nature of blue chip progress versus creativity: a project which is again beyond the overall scope of this particular dissertation.

Mediascapes.

Mediascapes in this instance will set out to discover the lifestyle, symbolism and branding necessary associated with a multi-media artist. Through the theory, this discourse will identify a marketing strategy within A&R. In February 1999, Mooradian (1999) announced:

“Record companies were losing out in taking a share of the online music market because they were promoting themselves through their company name, not their artist...the artist is the consumer brand, not the label”.

Mooradian clearly indicates that the lifestyle and brand image of an artist is the *raison d’être* in unit³³ sales. A consumer does not buy a product by way of loyalty to a label; rather he/she purchases an image that appeals to their level of affluence/aspiration. This has brought a marketing strategy to A&R, a point Chris Briggs (1998)³⁴ raised in an article edited by Jones (1998):

‘What A&R executive Briggs suggests, is for labels to get their scouts to ask themselves from the off, “who’s going to buy this and why?”

This highlights that the industry is not simply concerned with the music. Good looks, style, projection and versatility are as important to the finished product as is the ability to sing and dance. That’s not to say that music has lost out to image, quite the contrary. Artists such as The Sex Pistols, The Who, David Bowie as well as Britpop are all lifestyles personified with one thing in common. Each had an image before they signed their recording contract. In every case, the marketing department had only to take advantage of the talent and ideas on offer, rather than impose some trendy new style which may create an image that sits uncomfortably with the artist, as Frykberg (1999) points out:

“Sometimes you can end up doing it by numbers, which isn’t good for you or the artist”.

Concurring with Frykberg is A&R executive #11 who clarifies to Craig (1999):

'The songs were great, the band were amusing and talkative, but they had no sense of dress. Anyway, I left it to the marketing department. When I went to the fitting, I was horrified. The stylist had them all dressed in timberland check shirts and jeans - they looked like 'seven brothers for seven brides' instead of moody rock stars - I had to butt in'.

Simply stated, the A&R executive is expected to observe all the necessary traits in an artist before committing the company to contract. The more style and vision a band commands, leaves little space for the imposition of contrived styles by a marketing department upon the artist in question. Definitively history has proved that new music trends arise from a faction on the street and it is here that A&R is to be found sniffing around, deliberating on how he or she takes an otherwise local cult phenomenon and develop it to international status.

Ideoscapes.

This final dimension will identify the creative input by an A&R executive whilst developing his artist i.e. finding the right songs as well as identifying a sound that is individual to the artist. As history has indicated Gaisberg and his early contemporaries signed and 'made the record' with an artist, usually by matching a performer to a song. The reverse is in effect throughout A&R's current strategy. For example, if the artist does not write then A&R finds a writer or a song to suit the artist. This original research has also identified that pop bands such as 'The Spice Girls', 'Bros, Boyzone', 'Bewitched' and 'Westlife' did not write music and consequently their A&R managers employed song writers. Furthermore, this research also highlighted that the above mentioned acts were brought to the attention of A&R executives by well established Managers and not 'found' contrary to popular belief. The investigation has also shown that a scenario such as this happens more often than not. An indication of this is revealed in comments by A&R executive #8 to Craig (1999):

'I have yet to find a band from an unsolicited tape. All my acts have come from tried or tested sources'.

Nevertheless, the goal is to establish an identifiable sound by choosing the right people and environment which generates that all important synergy. As A&R executive #4 explains to Craig (2000):

"This is a long and arduous process and in some cases can take up to and occasionally over a year before a possible release".

The question of cost and availability of each player is uppermost. Considerations are as varied as the following examples document: does the project necessitate a particular producer to merit postponing recording for six months, which could bring about a contractual problem? Should the whole band be flown to America to work with an established artist in an effort to lend kudos to an otherwise unknown act? Is it absolutely essential to hire a horn and string section for 36 bars of music? All these questions and more begin the process of piecing together the vision that A&R and artist hope they both share in common. It is relevant

at this juncture to reiterate two case studies concerning the art of producer selection, as the ability to match producer to artist is intrinsic to the A&R role. Both A&R executives gave their consent to print events as they happened, so there has been no need to change names or disguise environments. Case study one reveals how important producer/song selection is, particularly when budget is not the issue.

Case Study 1 - Naked Records 1997

Naked Records was set up by two musicians of 'Curiosity Killed The Cat' fame. The operation was financed by a games company called Eidos, responsible for 'Tomb Raider', the popular play station game. The heroine of this game is a character called Lara Croft, a free spirited, gun toting, Indiana Jonesesque individual. The idea was to find a real life Lara Croft and record an album with her. In order to reflect the adventure indicative of the game, it was decided that recording sessions should take place in obscure/tropical places. For instance, two of the tracks were recorded, by Dave Stewart³⁵ in a high tech studio whilst sailing on a boat down the Amazon River in South America. A further three tracks were written and recorded in Jamaica and another in Nice. It is of pertinent interest to note that Dave Stewart owned all three of these studios. As exotic and reminiscent of the original game these locations may have been, the A&R briefing to both producer and artist was unclear and lacked clarity. The vision was left to the producer. This freedom consequently produced an entirely different type of Lara Croft than Eidos had hoped for. Eidos believed that Lara was bigger than any song that could be written for her and after hearing the results, dismissed the music project as pale and off centre. By this time the project was running at a loss of £300,000. It was at this point that Eidos withdrew from the venture. This was unfortunate as the media had already picked up on the story and Rhona³⁶ enjoyed centre-folds and front covers of lifestyle magazines such as FHM and Loaded.

Ultimately, ineffective 'A&Ring' had produced an indifferent album. On reflection, Thorpe³⁷ recalls to Craig (1999):

"I should have gone to an A&R publisher to get some great songs then I would have had someone else to bounce off, which may have led to a different choice of Producer".

Thorpe elaborates to Craig (1999) further:

There were two clear winners - Dave Stewart and Rhona Mitre. Dave took royalties for co-writing the songs, producer royalties on each track as well as booking up 3 of his studios for 4 months. As for Rhona, well, I understand she now has a prominent role in the new Sylvester Stallone/Michael Cain movie "Get Carter".

What conclusions can be drawn from the above? Clearly good songs are essential but more importantly an A&R executive must choose players that stay on track as well as making sure that what is being produced satisfies requirements for all concerned. Finally Thorpe explains to Craig (1999) how important it is for A&R to maintain a 'hands on' approach at all costs:

"All in all, I just didn't keep a hold on things. Yeah the trips were great and good for press, but what came out of it was so off track and I didn't know how to claw it back. I mean lyrically the songs were so far removed from the Lara Croft character. For

instance anyone who knows about Lara, knows that she is posh and probably drinks perrier. But one track came back with lyrics that talked about her sitting on Clapham Common with a pint of beer - I mean that is so not Lara Croft. Anyway, when Eidos heard it they just said to me no way. They refused to allow us to use the Lara Croft image which meant the whole project was in the ditch. If only I'd had the courage to say to Dave, sorry mate this isn't quite right".

The outcome? Six tracks sit in storage having never seen the light of day and Naked Records is no longer an ongoing concern. The next case study illustrates the difficulty of finding the right producer particularly when budget is an issue.

Case Study 2 - MCA Records 1990

The band was called Two Way Street. The Producer desired was John Leckie -responsible for hits with the Stone Roses and Primal Scream. Demo's (industry parlance for songs recorded without production) were sent to Leckie who after listening to their particular style of music, decided that the project was not for him. Six months ensued as the A&R manager sought out another producer who could give the band an all important modern sound as well as lend some cachet to the project. Initially, the band felt that their demo engineer had given them a definitive sound and requested that they should be allowed to go into the studio to do their album with him. The record company were nervous to the idea but eventually conceded. Three weeks later two recordings were given to the A&R manager who upon hearing, considered the efforts to be lifeless and not worthy of release. Enter producer number two, Andy Richards a protégé of Trevor Horn.³⁸ His production turned out to be so grand as to dwarf the band. By this point the act had spent £20,000 with nothing to show for it. Finally producer number three was chosen and tested. The results were acceptable and as time was running out it was agreed that the project would proceed using Craig Leon.³⁹ The results Chris.⁴⁰ (the bands A&R manager) remarks to Craig (1999):

A nice production but a terrible mix. As the budget would not allow for new mixes and contractually we had to put something out, the album had to be released as it stood. With less than an outstanding product, the marketing team refused to invest in a major campaign. Needless to say it was a huge failure. I ended up leaving the company, the band were dropped from the label and then promptly split up 2 months later. I wonder that perhaps they should never have had a deal. I mean to split up two months after being dropped seriously questions whether they would have been equipped to handle fame anyway'.

Hence, another album sits in storage, only this time budget, time and availability of a good producer keen to work on the project dictated the form.

So what has this dimension unearthed? In conclusion a good song is important but the choice of producer can dramatically alter its strength or weakness, which can be critical to the success of the record. Group focus and vision is paramount as well as an ability to call upon unquestionable strength and courage to change course should circumstances dictate. All in all a truly exigent challenge for any A&R manager.

The Internet Perspective.

The aim of this discourse is to discuss the contributory factor of internet technology and how it may affect the role of the A&R executive. Furthermore, it will highlight the strengths and limitations of a medium that appears to offer everything an individual needs to bypass the A&R executive in order to achieve that all important goal of fame and fortune.

The music industry has been fairly pedestrian in its embrace reports [Anon.] (2000):

'The music industry has been slow to capitalize on the Internet.

Moreover, talent-spotting has been the back bone of the business since embryo so will it stand the tests of digitalisation and the superhighway, as music moves into the 21st century? Once again [Anon.] (2000) reports:

"Once the internet seemed to be just another 'channel' – one more way to milk more revenues from existing media properties. But the Internet is today metamorphosing into a complex and radically different medium that creates as many challenges as it does opportunities for the traditional media giants".

The advent of the internet has made it possible for an unsigned artist to download sounds from various music libraries, utilize virtual studios offering 64 track mixing facilities, take samples from loop libraries, ultimately avoiding any contact with A&R. So what sort of challenge does this pose for today's executive? Is the role destined for extinction because by-passing allows more creative freedom together with greater financial return or will the role elevate to grand heights due to a lack of quality control as Burnett (1996) suggests:

"People stand to gain a lot through demystification of personal artistic expression. In a probable future scenario filled with endless bad media content, with too much supply and very specific demand, music might well become devalued".

This notion of devaluation has been brought to the fore by companies such as MP3.com and Napster who offer facilities to exchange music for free. Consequently the future for paid music is in question as Underhill et al. (1999) surmise:

"The future of music may not be in selling your music, but giving it away freely, and making money on shows and other product sales".

Sullivan (2000) a writer for Wired News, observes this possible future trend in her article 'Free Music, Getcher Free Music' she notes:

"It's the oldest marketing gimmick in the world. Give away the razor, sell razor blades. Will it pay for music to do the same?"

These strategies are debatable when considering the future of distribution in music and it is doubtful that they will threaten the existence of A&R. However the debate for creative input by A&R is worth contemplation. As already demonstrated from an historical perspective, Gaisberg was inundated by individuals who believed they had talent when he clearly felt they did not. Today this influx of would-be music stars will flood the Internet causing what Spellman (2000) defines as:

"The new technologies present tremendous opportunities for an unprecedented "sensualization" of musical expression'.

This swamping of the digital highway will make it more difficult for internet users to focus on any particular artist, consequently they will look to the many web sites who offer free music, relatively simple to find, by searching through the user's favourite musical genre. Spellman (2000) elaborates:

"As of mid-1999 there are over 85,000 music-related newsgroups, mailing lists and web sites on the net".

As we can observe from the above, these web sites are springing up fast, to the irritation of A&R executives. A&R executive #14 elucidates to Craig (2000):

"We have been at loggerheads for years with artists over the idea of 'pigeon-holing' yet they flock to these so called talent spotting web sites like bees round a honey pot - it's unbelievable - but hey, gone will be that old line, "we don't sound like Radiohead etc., we have an original sound", now that they are happy to be categorized - perhaps it's not such a bad thing after all'.

It would appear from the above that a new trend of self-assessment has materialized with regard to the aspiring musician and his approach to getting noticed. To admit to a genre is a huge step towards understanding the marketplace and a consumers need to have category - a pre-requisite for record collections. As A&R executive #14 indicated, this type of application was rare to find in the unsigned before the net. There is also a plethora of educational books dealing with self promotion available on the Internet, which may bolster a new found knowledge to the artist about marketing records. However, there is one point of consideration wholly important to life without A&R - Is the artist able to criticize his own work? Spellman (2000) philosophises:

"Virtual reality can't free us from the constraints of our own imagination and creativity. In the end, the music still has to come from us".

This is the ultimate argument for A&R. Most artists can only go so far before input from an exterior source is necessary in order to instruct what angles and nuances are required to make great records. The 'hook' is one of these. This is commonly defined as the noticeable chorus, bass line, guitar riff, or some other sound that is memorable to the track. The lack of a hook can produce, in the words of A&R executive #5 to Craig (2000):

"a song, which is linear and feckless".

Hooks are generally brought about by the producer working on the project but it is the A&R man who is responsible for putting a producer into the frame. The question is how many artists believe they can by-pass a producer as well as A&R? Most talent spotting web sites have a producer on their staff or are completely staffed by producers, such as Garageband.com chaired by Sir George Martin -again at the forefront of technology. Therefore it is possible to conclude that this self-appointed style of talent scouting within the industry concurs with the idea that an up and coming artist requires external input at the

outset of his career. It is also relevant to consider those artists who are determined to stay independent. Aside of on-line studio facilities the net also offers web radio. Spellman (2000) reports:

“Web radio has grown from 178 stations in 32 countries in August 1996 to more than 1800 stations on the net by mid-1999”.

Whilst the net alludes to global network coverage, some of these internet radio stations are run by Web sites such as MP3.com who claim to offer free services but manage to siphon a membership tariff from the unsigned artist - again exploitation at its best as Spellman (2000) declares:

“The fast talkers and “snake oil peddlers” wormed their way into executive offices and some still hide out there. But that was then - this is now? Over the past twenty years or so, hucksters, gamblers and amateurs have been replaced by responsible team players...”.

The above quote could be considered to be a little unrealistic. As we are warned time and again on the news, the Internet is a lawless tool required to be used with integrity, so one could construe a proverbial ‘snake pit’ when it comes to unsigned artist acquisition? Unquestionably, it is inevitable that the idea of fame leads even the most level-headed to part with their money in a bid to acquire success. A warning from A&R executive #7 to Craig (1999) supports this theory:

“Money doesn’t make a great idea for a song or an image.”

A further consideration for independent artists is whether or not they have an ability to fulfil many different roles. For instance, one hat may be for writing and recording music, the next for promoting the project, another for arranging a concert and so on. This can be very disconcerting as Spellman (2000) points out:

“it’s the rare artist who can function alone effectively as business person without some conflict with their creative side”.

Evidently self promotion on the Internet is more time consuming than most would believe and this realization will only become clear when the artist embarks on his mission. Accordingly, Underhill et al. (1999) surmise that there is a potential for web sites, who offer promotional packages, to emerge.

“I foresee the promotional market becoming highly competitive”.

Naturally these packages will come at a cost, however, Underhill et al. (1999) raise an interesting question:

“Once the artist achieves worldwide recognition, distribution by MP3 stops becoming a promotional venture and becomes a chief source of Commerce”.

This highlights the question of whether an artist wishes to just be heard or whether he wishes to be famous and rich, the latter bringing to light the complexity of royalty collection. Is an

artist equipped to handle such an operation? Royalty collection by today's standards is problematic, not to mention pirate recordings and the free exchange of computer music files. So how would the artist cope? Clearly the 'do it yourself' operation looks set to be a fairly small enterprise and will likely remain so unless one sells out to others for infrastructure.

A&R view the arena of the Internet from a slightly different perspective. It would appear from this research that there is little sign of anxiety or fear of extinction as A&R executive #9 communicates to Craig (1999):

"A&R has no fear of the internet. In fact it's only an extension of the existing network of would be talent scouts. In fact it is greatly to our advantage. Without doubt we will receive less demo's to deal with as well as the opportunity to "sign artists who have done all the hard work themselves. I see a future where a band come into the office with 'stats' [sic] showing how many hits they have had on their web site which will give us a good idea of what size of fan base they have to begin with. Yeah I like that 'show us your stats'".

An interesting observation. Will the future of artist signings be based on statistics rather than a passion for the music. In the past, bands such as the Beatles 'were passed on' (music industry parlance for not signing an artist) by many record companies before being signed up so could this business strategy avoid those mistakes?

Moreover the results have shown that most A&R executives agree with Spellman (2000):

"More often than not, musicians tend to get nowhere because of the absence of a map".

The lack of professionalism in an unsigned artist seems to be a fundamental consideration. One hundred percent of the executives interviewed stated categorically that from their experience ninety nine percent of unsigned acts had little or no idea how to present themselves and furthermore insisted that career/goal strategy was non-existent. These observations would appear to provide a safety net for A&R executives fuelling the argument for the need to have A&R.

Ultimately no major reservations were expressed from these executives concerning the Internet. Overall the A&R executives interviewed had an indifferent attitude towards the net and appeared bemused at the suggestion that their occupation was threatened.

The research on this chapter has produced some pertinent insights into the A&R perspective and demonstrated not only the possibilities of technology, but more importantly the limitations. So what can we observe from this information? Clearly the Internet offers a smorgasbord of tools for the unsigned artist to experiment with, however, to reiterate commentary by a majority of the industry sources who participated in this research:

'a Les Paul Gold Top guitar does not maketh the axe hero!'

This chapter has resoundingly witnessed the need for an A&R role, particularly with regard to the Internet. Whilst the Internet has changed communications dramatically and altered the machinations of industry, the evidence produced in this chapter shows that the Internet will

not change the face of A&R per se. This, as already stated, is due to the fact that talent not technology is the operative word.

DISCUSSION

This study has examined three hypotheses, which determine how the A&R executive acquires his technique, what environments he embraces and whether the contributory factor of current technology affects his role. This examination understands that A&R technique is acquired through learning curves, adopting an empirical approach, as opposed to academic. A&R embraces all the major departments within a record company holding together an idea/concept collectively. Externally, the A&R executive is very much in demand and tends to suffer reprisal from time to time. With regard to Internet factors, A&R seem to harbour no fear or threat from this medium and treat the Internet as an unofficial talent scout and marketing tool. Ultimately the three hypotheses herein show historical and contemporary parallels within A&R and present a rare insight into this industry role. However this study has not been without its difficulties.

CONCLUSION

This project has been a difficult task beleaguered by subjective contribution, difficult to verify by way of its clandestine nature. The study itself has been innovative and original both in content and subject matter. This is largely due to the reason that A&R has never before been subject to rigorous scholarly study. However, if this dissertation has fulfilled any single part of its original proposition, then at least it can be said to have given the reader a rare insight and previously unrecorded documentation of the world of A&R. Given that we are devoid, in the main part, of any books on the subject⁴² this research has shown that throughout history, from Gaisberg to his modern day equivalent, the A&R executive has developed his role and expanded/expounded his knowledge primarily through experience, i.e. trial and error, treading a somewhat tempestuous and empirical path. As the philosopher Locke (1690) suggests:

“Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience”.

Concurring with Locke is contemporary photographer Adams (2000) whose quote sums up an empirical approach within a creative environment:

“In wisdom gathered over time I have found that every experience is a form of exploration”.

This propensity has been highlighted using the Appadurai framework in order to report the fundamentals of A&R management and its relationship with the Internet et al. It is also important to note that this pioneering research has been produced as an introduction for future investigations in this field. As previously demonstrated, the A&R executive has been shown to be schematic, manipulative and unorthodox, yet paradoxically he embraces talent protectively, lays career to risk through faith in his signings, as well as harbouring many

insecurities.

Using ethnoscaples, technoscaples, finanscaples mediascaples and ideoscaples this research has diligently pursued the quest to uncover what has been considered to be a covert environment. Constantly criticized as being ruthless, off hand and even lacking in ability, the A&R executive has been forced to draw the veil for protection.

Consequently the discoveries have highlighted the A&R executive as a secretive explorer, given to contradiction, driven by the idea of success and fame combined with tendency's to arrogance, madness and 'burn-out' or as Aristotle (n.d.) philosophises:

"All paid jobs absorb and degrade the mind"

Until recently, most A&R executives were inclined to shy away from media attention as A&R executive #9 explains to Craig (1999):

"I think he's a brave man. We would never have done that. You are putting yourself straight into the spotlight if it doesn't work it's all over. Apart from that, the papers slaughter you - you lose a bit of cred. [sic]"

With few guidelines to follow, each has developed their own original medium/ethic by which they work, thus the shroud of secrecy and subsequent mythology surrounding their actual occupation. It could truly be said that the A&R executive lives the observation by Twain (1996):

"The man with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds."

As diverse as they are individual, as a collective A&R executives have several common traits, which could be understood as typical of the role. These traits as I have evidenced throughout are dogmatism, adversity, tenacity, creativity, likeability, vulnerability and uncertainty.

So how does this research understand the A&R executive? Having established an empirical approach to A&R, it would follow that the executive is also adept at multi-tasking. Hence, the executive can be defined as pluralist by association, consumed by the socio-political and economic climate within which he operates. Furthermore, given that the company machine is essentially a capitalist institution, it is probable that most individuals working within this regime would be swallowed into the ethos by default. This perspective has been brought to the fore by all of the subjects interviewed and summing it up is A&R executive #7 who recalls to Craig (1999):

"When I first started out, my fundamental drive was to give these bends a step towards success. I felt really sorry for them. That attitude changed after about two years when I realized that graduating to A&R manager from talent scout was all about accepting the way the business worked. This meant being extremely selective. To waste time with very nice but not so talented people was going to get me nowhere. Yeah, I sold out but so does everyone else, if you want it to work that is".

Another relevant perspective evidenced via this research has highlighted a pro active approach within A&R, i.e. 'living on the front line'. A&R executives are expected to be on the

'cutting edge' of new music, however marketing departments tend to allocate budgets according to current trends favouring a more reactive approach. A complete irony perhaps; however the acquisition of independent record companies by the majors allows streaming of 'difficult to break' artists through an independent route. This costs less money and in a lot of cases adds kudos - depending on the label of course. Once the artist has a hit, the major takes over the helm. This frees up time for a major executive to sign up pop acts whose fortunes turn round quicker than any other musical genre leading to the abundance of boy and girl bands we saw in the 90's, such as S Club Seven, Al, Boyzone, Westlife and Atomic Kitten etc. A&R executive #3 concludes to Craig (1999):

"We're just waiting for the bubble to burst".

This strategy has brought about the question of imperialism in music. Sims [n.d.] writes:

"if you look at it from the perspective of multi-national corporations, you could make the case that in their aggressive global marketing they are imperialist, but they are only interested in selling their products, not in American cultural megalomania"... Through the criticisms of cultural imperialism in terms of its views of media power, role in society and view of the audience, a point that needs to be made in conclusion is the inherently paternalistic attitude these charges take toward native cultures. At best, the cultural imperialism view offers a mixed message by defending the non-dominate cultures and further undermining their innate power and cohesion. To say we are protecting the native cultures" implies that the culture is not strong or resilient enough to withstand influence and change on its own, which throughout history has not been the case."

Whilst we have witnessed a plethora of boy and girl bands, we have still seen new rock bands such as Coldplay, Prodigy, Radiohead, The Corrs, The Manic Street Preachers, Feeder, Wheatus and Savage Garden as well as continued sales of bands such as U2 and Bon Jovi. Ultimately the A&R executive cannot be blamed for the imperialistic philosophies brought to bear upon the industry product, however it could be argued that he holds some responsibility for standardization. By dominating the global music market, the major record companies have created standards and genres to which youth culture aspire to. This together with the advent of the internet as demonstrated in chapter three, has cleared the path for a debate on the internationalisation of music. Gleick (1994) reports:

"The Internet has taken shape with startlingly little planning... The most universal and indispensable network on the planet somehow burgeoned without so much as a board of directors, never mind a mergers-and-acquisitions department There is a paradoxical lesson here for strategists. In economic terms, the great corporations are acting like socialist planners, while old-fashioned free-market capitalism blossoms at their feet".

Whilst the above quote sounds a warning for blue chip industry, it does not quite resonate the same for the music industry viz a viz A&R. Through the serious critique given to this discourse in Chapter three, we have observed a certain nonchalance by the A&R executive regarding the internet. A&R executive #8 maintains to Craig (1999):

'Basically it's a crowd gatherer. Word of mouth isn't given as much credit... or is that 'word of mouse'? [sic] ... whatever... once they've pulled together a decent

fan base and done all the hard work, the next logical step is to come to us to make it global-

Whilst the internet may offer the opportunity to go global, albeit hypothetically, the results in this thesis have shown that once the promotional work is done, there is still a matter of collecting some form of payment - a general expectation in this capitalist environment. MacDonald et al. (2000) offer information on one possible method to collect payment:

'One solution being offered by an American company called 'Inter Trust', controls the number of times a song can be played, how much it costs and who gets the money, even if the music file is sent to another user... this system is being used together with innovations such as the Magex 'virtual wallet' which allows users to make secure micro-payments - such as the current standard of 99p per downloaded song being charged - without the need for credit card transactions each time'.

How this new technology will guarantee full royalty return to the self promoting musician is unknown. Ultimately major record companies have, by design, built a global media network deploying television, radio, magazines, newspapers and fly posting as well as the internet. With teams of people⁴³ manipulating these media gatekeepers, a record company with its media synergy can produce a national or international campaign parallel to the film industry. Clearly the internet as an individual tool cannot provide this type of overall result.

On a different note this discourse has also established the concept that an artist is generally unable to criticize his/her own work. Like a mother defends her child, so will an artist defend theirs - that being their music. This blind love tends to set limits within the artist's dynamic and affords only to inaugurate the A&R man.

In conclusion this thesis has examined and uncovered generalities and mythologies concerned with the A&R environment. However, one aspect of the job still remains a mystery. The question of luck. As previously discussed, not all bands, given the major record company priority treatment actually become international artists. Many A&R men have sat back and shook their heads in disbelief as A&R executive #8 recalls to Craig (1999):

"We had everything going - Album which cost £200,000, a video budget was guaranteed for £80,000 for each single release. We had windows at Tower Records in Piccadilly, full page ads running in NME⁴⁴ and Melody Maker, fly posting, everything mate - TV interviews with live performances as well as B List at Radio 1- it bombed massively - we never understood where we went wrong".

Of the eight major A&R executives interviewed, all admitted to having experienced the above scenario. When asked to explain why they thought it hadn't worked, they all replied 'no idea'. Whilst reading through their replies to this question it was interesting to note that each executive used words such as 'bad timing', 'fate' or 'it clearly just wasn't meant to be'. So do all these A&R executives dabble in fatalism? Or does science allow for such eventuality? Perhaps the answer lies elsewhere. Cassidy (2001) cites Heisenberg (1927):

'The more precisely the position is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known in this instant and vice versa'.

'The Uncertainty Principle' is a theory known in the *Quantum Mechanical world* as dealing, in the main, with measurement of particles. However as a philosophy, it has extraordinarily similar parallels with the music industry particularly if we exchange the word particle for artist. Cassidy (2001) again quotes Heisenberg (1927):

'A consequence of the Quantum Mechanical nature of the world, is that particles can appear in places where they have no right to be (from ordinary, common sense [classical] point of view)'.

Applied to the music charts over the last ten years, several number one's have been questioned as to how they achieved this position not just by A&R but by consumers alike. For instance Cliff Richard's Christmas version of 'The Lords Prayer'⁴⁵ was refused airplay by many radio stations. With several other major contenders⁴⁶ in the market place at that time the general consensus was resounding that Richards would never reach No: 1. He did. As already discussed above, situations have arisen in an A&R department where a big budget artist is failing to make an impression on his target audience. The question remains as to why some artists given a major company's full resources are still subject to unpredictability. Cassidy (2001) finalizes with Heisenberg (1927):

'There is an uncertainty associated with each measurement which can never be rid of even in a perfect experiment This is due to the fact that whenever a measurement is made, the system must be disturbed (In order for me to know something is there, I must bump into it).

Could it be possible that in some cases translation from demo tape to CD/vinyl causes enough disturbance to all parts that the final result pales to the original version? A&R executive #11 recounts to Craig (1999):

"No matter how many times we tried in the studio we couldn't get it to sound like the demo - after four producers giving it a shot, we just ended up tweaking the demo and putting that out It held an innocence that we could not recreate in the studio".

Or is it a case of bumping into it, i.e. does a hit mix of a track happen by chance? A&R executive #10 recalls to Craig (1999):

"So the lawyer said to me at the A&R meeting, how many more mixes do you need to do for gods sake. I just told him that we didn't have a hit mix yet and that I would know it when I heard it."

To analyse these theories would require intensive study and necessitate further breakthroughs in the field of science. [Anon.][n.d.] quotes Heisenberg:

"We do not know if this indeterminism is actually the way the universe works because the theory of Quantum Mechanics is probably incomplete. That is, we do not know if the Universe actually behaves in a probabilistic manner (there are many possible paths a particle can follow and the observed path is chosen probabilistically) or if the Universe is deterministic in the sense that I can predict the path a particle will follow with 100% certainty."

Quite clearly there is more discussion to uncertainty than this discourse will permit consequently we are left with quantifying the A&R executive in a macro sense. We have observed that he is a fairly archetypal individual. A workaholic in love with music who has some great ideas and no fear of puffing them into practice. He is also subject to internal company politics both regionally and globally and those who stay the pace tend to be entrepreneurial in essence and probably capable of careers in other areas such as advertising, promotions/PR or marketing. Presently these executives have no internet quandaries and their raison d'être can best be described by Kemp (2000) as:

"...sustaining cultural relevance - that's what pop music is about."

What we can ascertain however is that the future of our music lies in the hands of individuals who are continuing to evolve within a 'white-collar' environment bringing about the extinction of the unusual character that has been indicative of successful A&R executives in the past, as A&R executive #3 indicates to Craig (1999):

"He was a brute to work for and took no prisoners but boy he had a great ear. He instinctively knew a star when he saw one. Saying that, up until about fifteen years ago, most of the A&R men that had any reasonable success with their acts were a bit peculiar. Nowadays it's all about politics and bottom line. It's sad really, there are so few mad characters around any longer, our eccentric mavericks have disappeared... "

What these overall implications will do to music is presently unknown. However, what we can consider is the probability of the answer being out there, it may just be a matter of A&R 'bumping' into it!

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Notes.

- 1 The Artist and his music.
- 2 Born in Hanover Germany 1851 and emigrated to the US in 1870 where he developed the gramophone - 'Since Records Began-EMI' p.11-12, 1997.

3 first disc record made by acid-etching sound signals into zinc plates.
4 Born in Washington D.C. in 1873 to German parents.
5 Writer could find no other evidence to challenge this statement.
6 Selling American imports only, they relied heavily on shipments of records from Frank
Seaman a New York Advertising Executive. He wished to take the British market
himself and so refused to ship any more records, hoping to put The Gramophone
Company out of business.
7 British Phonogram Institute - a self-governing industry body.
8 Music industry parlance, which describes the machinations of a record company.
9 Marketing is responsible for putting the campaign together directing Press &
Promotions accordingly.
10 Managing Director. Business Affairs (Legal), Chairman.
11 The Beatles Producer - sometimes known as the 5th Beatle.
12 Martin had a disagreement with senior management when they refused to give him a
Christmas bonus. Whilst he survived on a salary of £3,000 per annum, he felt that he
should get 'something more by way of payment', particularly when EMI had made
profits £2,200,000 in the previous year, off the back of his recordings. 'The Beatles
Encyclopaedia' - p.725, 2000.
13 Associated Independent Recordings.
14 At this point in history, record companies hired their own stable of in-house producers
who were salaried.
15 A percentage of the sale of each record.
16 An innovative Producer in the 60's who was considered to be responsible for the
invention of 'overdubbing'.
17 Music industry parlance for the artist and his record.
18 A Music Industry Course based in London.
19 Of the 24 interviewed only 7 remain in A&R at the time of writing.
20 50% of the A&R executives interviewed admitted to have consumed both drugs and
alcohol at one time or another.
21 Such as 'Wham Confidential' by Johnny Rogan, 1987 and 'A&R' a fictional book by Bill
Flanagan, 2000
22 The old fashioned term for A&R man.
23 Format is the Music Industry term for Vinyl, CD, 12", Cassette etc.
24 For instance the picture disc.
26 Three brothers - Joe, Ken and Stanley. New York entrepreneurial musicians who
created Salsoul Records independently via their expertise in the Latin-American music
market - www.lycos.com/salsoulrecords.
27 An American history scholar.
28 Standardization in this instance should be interpreted as music, which retains certain
features that could be said to be indicative of the genre within which it sits. Today's
A&R men already refer to 'standard pop', 'standard rock', 'standard R&B' etc.. This
standardization distributed globally could possibly be responsible for pushing
indigenous music aside to favour a more western sound.
29 Importation of American product in particular music such as Elvis.
30 Music Industry parlance for a record company having the option to sign for a further
single or album.
31 This instance would require the band to produce demo's, write further material as well
as address their fashion/style angle.
32 The figures in the table although in dollars are still a fine example of today's tariffs

- even when converted into sterling.
- 32 The advent of the CD created a whole new avenue for record companies to exploit their back catalogue. Consequently most companies felt fairly flush during this period.
- 33 Unit is an industry term for each record sold or shipped.
- 34 A&R executive at Chrysalis.
- 35 One half of the band Eurythmics, occasional film director and producer of various artists such as Shakespears Sister and Scarlet.
- 36 Rhona Mitre - the actress selected at that time to be Lara Croft.
- 37 One time bass player with band 'Curiosity Killed The Cat' and creator of Naked Records.
- 38 Producer of 'Frankie Goes To Hollywood' and 'Seal'.
- 39 Producer of bands such as Blondie, 'The Fall' and 'Talking Heads' and one time A&R man at Sire Records, the label that brought us 'Madonna'.
- 40 Talent scout at MCA.
- 42 Neither Amazon.com, Bol.com, Foyles or Waterstones has a book on A&R.
- 43 As a promotional secretary I was witness to manipulation in the form of wining and dining producers from radio and TV in order to gain slots for the artist.
- 44 New Musical Express - A weekly music publication.
- 45 Known as 'The Millennium Prayer'.
- 46 Such as Boyzone's - 'Every Day I Love You' and Westlife's - 'I have a Dream/Seasons In The Sun'.