

A Cautionary Tale for the New Year

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Regular followers of The Tip Sheet will know we're often miles ahead of "the business" when it comes to finding new music talent; but even when the others latch on and help, serious mistakes can be made... so this is a Guide to Tip Sheet Talent suddenly finding other supporters...

... The Vacancy (who put the demo for She Walks Right Through Me on the Tipsheet - we loved it and pushed it like crazy... there was a huge bidding war; they took on a "Top Showbiz Lawyer" who steered them towards Nick Raphael at Sony (wanker) who paid them a fortune, changed their name to UK Audio or something, told them to be "grunge-ier", spent millions trying to break them, broke nothing, dropped them...).

...Ditto Orson who we featured on the Tipsheet and, as a result, had a No1 with No Tomorrow and then sank without trace (took on another wanker from the Record of the Day as Manager). The Exec there was Jason Iley, head of Phonogram/Mercury. What should have been a huge Global success became a One Hit Wonder.

Going further back for some of my personal "picks"... Chumbawamba... Who Let The Baha Men Out... great smashes all became One Hit Wonders due to wanky executives and "Top Lawyers"...

So beware beware of "charm" from the new set of execs in music - most in their 30s/40s/50s... almost every one is not just useless but dangerously suffocates talent by going the accepted, industry route. They are simply basically clueless.

Don't allow yourselves to be seduced by the enthusiasm of those who may think they can make lots of money from you... they will probably give you bad advice, steer you in the wrong direction, and destroy the potential (with, often, the best intentions - they just haven't got a clue).

It's a heady moment when at last success appears; you'll be very tempted to go with the most seductive people but don't let that happen. "I'll do it for free" from lawyers and others sounds great until the "when you sign I'll take my fee" excuse gets muttered... so what they are saying, "suddenly" thinking you've got a hit after interest from someone else, is "the deal I'll advise/do/construct is the one I make most from; fuck the artiste". Quite a good trick is "thanks for not charging; but your "fee" won't be paid on signing and getting an advance - it will be AFTER we get our first No1 in the UK and USA - and then we'll pay you THREE times what you're asking but until then - nothing". Or similar.

Even 10cc fell apart after we'd laid the foundations at UK Records; they signed with Phonogram (now Universal) for a fortune, had hits with music they had recorded when under contract to us, then split, foundered, died away - that was the end of their career, the moment the "big boys" took over.

It's not just the new lot. The wankers dominated even back then. I think it was a character thing; climbing the slippery pole of corporate success is a different skill to actually breaking, establishing and, most important, NURTURING talent. I think that's what I miss. People like Brian Epstein, Tom Parker, Andrew Loog Oldham were USELESS at business and, in many ways, lousy managers - but they did a great job nurturing the talent. Where are those managers today? I can't think of a single one.