

Alex Day - how we did it!

Monday, 26 December 2011

Alex Day - the story behind the hit.

So; it all started when I noticed You Tube, just after it started. I was going off My Space which had become cluttered and slow and lost any filter advantages. Though I'd discovered No Tomorrow by Orson and started its journey to No1 on there. On You Tube I found Geriatric1927 - a delightful old man called Peter who posted videos about his childhood experiences during the 2nd World War. I decided to start posting my own life tales; despite the "haters" getting most of the first ones removed, after a bit You Tube surrendered and, using numerous accounts, I had hundreds of films up there (they still are; check them out).

Then I saw a very funny video called How To Be English by a teenager - CharlielsSoCoolLike - and posted on the Tip Sheet that this was a kid to be watched; a future talent.

Having completed my first home made film; Vile Pervert;The Musical (now over 66,000 free full length views/downloads), I was working on my second - Me Me Me.

As I wrote the script I realised I would need young actors to play the four leads - two boys and two girls. Charlie had turned 18 and was developing as an actor. He'd be a perfect Johnny Bambino. And I came across another 18 year old - Tommy - who I thought would be great as the brother (Jay Fratello) - he had a much watched music video.

I contacted Tommy, only to discover he'd sent me a sweet and supportive message a year or so earlier saying he believed in my innocence and integrity. I'd replied with a polite thank you at the time (considering messages from 17 year olds to be probably fakes sent by News of the World hacks). So Tommy and I met and became close friends.

We tried to crack the "new model" with a cover of David Bowie's Prettiest Star under the name Tommy Firefly but only managed a few hundred downloads. Through Tommy I met his friends Alex and Ed and eventually Charlie. None of them were creating songs I thought were hits so I suggested they formed a band - or a collective - called Sons of Admirals (Ed's choice of name).

Tommy produced Here Comes My Baby and made a terrific version I thought. Charlie put together a superb video (over 4 million You Tube views and still growing).

But, although it squeaked into the Top 40, Charlie hated being a "pop star" and Tommy also said he didn't enjoy it. Their meetings with Music Industry executives put them off the entire thing (and who could blame them? The majority of people are now dull, bored and useless).

I made Me Me Me - actually with neither Charlie nor Tommy but with two Northern brothers - Henry and Rupert. Alex and Charlie adored the film and became massive supporters, promoting it like crazy.

All four had become friends of mine by now. Alex desperately DID want to succeed but his songs simply weren't strong enough.

I told him why. He persevered. He improved. His music got better and better. When he sent me Forever Yours I said "this could be a hit".

"At last", he replied.

So we worked on a plan to turn it into a hit. The couple of industry people I'd sent it to either weren't keen or didn't get back to him (including Richard at XL). I told him about my successful "Xmas No1 contender" method - as we'd tried with The Cuban Boys and Joe had used for Nizlopi. I warned him he'd have to work like crazy.

The great thing about Alex is - he doesn't just listen and think. If he agrees, he does it.

Between us we plotted a strategy. He contributed many ingredients (like all the different mixes). He wrote to his fans saying - only if they really loved the track; would they help break it? Thousands answered - he spent hours E-Mailing each personally. It was my decision to make it available in November and not just in the week before Christmas (I hated that boring old traditional industry trick of concentrating sales to get a high chart place - we wanted to sell a lot of copies whilst the No1 campaign was simply a focus) but he came up with Forever Day being the 18th and therefore having a day to increase interest and get a huge sale over one day.

The structure and ideas were both of ours. All the work was his.

Charlie made a magnificent video, encapsulating the innocence and sweetness of the lyric about the positive joy of childhood friendship.

The Sunday Times were going to do a big feature but dropped it because of the "guns" in the video. Instead they did a piece on the wives of soldiers who carry and use real guns every day. I laughed.

With no label or publisher or PR person, he had to do everything himself. It was exhausting.

No radio or TV joined the party. They couldn't hear it as a hit. It didn't sound like everything else. The dull programmers prefer to support Major Label projects (that way they look good when they become "hits"). But the fans loved it and bought it in their thousands. Over 52,000 in a week, actually, beating Coldplay into the Top 5 and finishing the week at No4.

Result!

And well deserved.

Alex is wiped out but loved every minute of it.

Forever Yours doesn't sound like everything else.

It doesn't sound like the weak photocopies our industry A&R makes with One Direction or Olly Murs or Steve Brookstein or most British Major Label Priority Acts. The Americans do photo copy better than we do but with a few exceptions (Bruno Mars; some GaGa) they are just really good copies.

We Brits can find the best when it comes to Originals though. If we try.

Let's hope Alex is the first of many unique and original new British talents.