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CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGNS AS CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC NEGOTIATIONS

WITHIN NEOLIBERAL CULTURE

by

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B.S. May 2013, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

"WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!"
CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGNS AS CULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS
WITHIN NEOLIBERAL CULTURE

David Zachary Gehring
Old Dominion University, 2016
Director: Dr. Tim J. Anderson

This thesis is a qualitative study that critically examines crowdfunding campaigns established to fund music projects. It argues that these campaigns are instantiations of neoliberalism, influenced by and reflective of cultural commitments operative within music communities and a shifting industrial context. For this study, neoliberalism represents a particular mode of free market capitalism characterized by discourses emphasizing individual agency free from regulatory constraints, and the rearticulation of cultural values rhetorically prioritized over market interests. Emerging within this cultural and industrial ecology informed and motivated by neoliberalism, and shaped through the dynamic flux of fan/artist relationships and industrial uncertainty, the crowdfunding model potentiates both the establishment of a new industrial paradigm that empowers both artist and fan, as well as an ideologically disguised instance of consumer disempowerment that works against the values of community the model puts forth.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Amanda Palmer, both successful solo act and singer/keyboardist of the Boston-based band "The Dresden Dolls," launched a crowdfunding campaign through Kickstarter.com. Initially seeking only $100,000, Palmer ended up receiving over $1 million in financial contributions from her fans. Not surprisingly, the success of Palmer's campaign drew media coverage and commentary, both positive and critical. Criticism of Palmer was varied, ranging from citing her inflated album budget as "implausible" (Doyle 2014) to questioning her utilization of free labor while on tour (Clover 2012). More unreflective click-bait coverage pieces such as "Amanda Palmer is an Idiot," appeared and referred to her as a "deluded and opportunistic narcissist" (Doyle 2014). Palmer herself has become an unofficial spokesperson for crowdfunding. She's given a TEDtalk and written a book entitled "The Art of Asking. Palmer was even featured on the "about us" section of Kickstarter.com claiming how crowdfunding (CF) places you within a community of "art fanatics."

While many have and continue to praise Palmer, I find this exchange of varied criticisms and responses revealing. The aforementioned media coverage highlights ethical pressure points within music cultures brought to the fore in CF campaigns. For example, Palmer explains that CF exchange represents an ideal method for artists and their fans to engage in a mutually beneficial, and especially personal, relationship: fans are granted heightened degrees of access to the creative process and exclusive content, and the artist receives funding. In a recent message to her fans regarding her decision to use Patreon, a CF platform that facilitates on-going patronage rather than finite projects funded through Kickstarter, Palmer writes, "I'm really excited to see what happens with this, guys. Whether you're backing me for a dollar or ten dollars, I am so glad

you're here. every patron who's supporting me is important to this community, YOU'RE who

i'm creating for, and i'm glad you found me here" [sic] (Dredge 2015).

While Palmer is certainly the most cited example when discussing the dynamics of CF,

she is the exception to a more modest rule. In 2014, the average campaign raised somewhere

between $1,000 and $10,000 (Zorn 2014). To date, Kickstarter campaigns alone (not including

other platforms such as Indiegogo or PledgeMusic) have drawn in $2 billion dollars in total since

its launch in 2009 with music campaigns drawing in $158 million. Throughout this time this

method has become an increasingly popular way for musicians from all levels of success to fund

their projects. The debate that has emerged around Amanda Palmer in the wake of the success of

her CF campaign encapsulates many of the issues informing a much larger discussion focused on

the paradigm shift and on-going reorientation of the music industries.

This research project explores the emerging debate centered on CF and questions of fan

exploitation and industry appropriation, as it critically analyzes the process of CF and how it

potentially transforms, or reorients, the social role of the musician and his or her relationship to

the creative process, the music industries, and fan communities. Throughout it remains focused

on this reorientation as it reflects the effects of neoliberalism within emerging digital cultures.

Employing discursive and textual analysis, I deliver an ideological critique of the rhetoric and

structure of various CF campaigns. This analysis will be set against data drawn from surveys and

interviews with musicians of varying self defined success levels. As such, the project explores

practices and self conceptions of musicians defined and negotiated within the CF process. These

practices include the responsibilities and obligations the artist assumes relating specifically to CF

campaigns. This analysis also takes into consideration evolving notions of fan communities and

the role they play in the creation and production of content, and how CF alters or disrupts the

relationship between value and cost, i.e. CF as a space in which values are reassigned according to cultural ideologies that can work to veil, or redirect attention from, cost and financial expenditure. Throughout I argue that CF creates a new space of discourse and exchange characterized by an increased emphasis on the social dimensions of the fan/artist dynamic which alters the modes of exchange.

The initial chapter sets out the intent of this thesis project. It begins by briefly discussing Amanda Palmer's successful and controversial CF campaign before offering an abstract to explicitly state the content and goals of this study. In what follows, I provide a general explanation the CF mechanism and how it functions within the current industrial and cultural environment in order to identify the main themes that will be explored. This chapter also locates this work in relation to previous scholarship, and concludes by discussing the methods employed in research.

Crowdfunding and Commodity in the Wake of Industrial Crisis

As defined by Gerber and Hui, reward-based CF is the online request for resources from a distributed audience often in exchange for reward (2013). Similar in practice to crowdsourcing, CF provides a path for would-be (or established) entrepreneurs and artists to circumvent more traditional modes of funding (i.e. through corporate or shadow investors, artist grants, record labels, movie studios, etc.). Instead, artists and go directly to interested individuals within their networks in hopes of drawing smaller amounts from each contributor

While this practice has acquired a high degree of visibility in recent years, it is important to remind ourselves that this is not a particularly new method of raising funds. CF is essentially a mode of fundraising similar to a pledge drive one might hear once a year on NPR. It is also similar to a pre-order, the consequential distinction being that the product being ordered depends

on the funding requested. As communicative technologies have provided new ways to connect with large potions of the population, reward-based funding has become a method infused with the potential to garner substantial amounts of capital drawn from, and connecting, various geographic regions. As such, reward-based funding could not only help niche projects find financing but also substantially alter the mode of production by providing new ways through which independent artist can connect directly to potential audiences who can assist in the production and dissemination of content without the reliance upon the long established third party intermediaries largely represented by major record labels.

Anyone with an idea can launch a campaign through any number of CF platforms. Each platform offers its own variations of how their campaigns and sites work, each of which cater to different users. Indiegogo offers open funding which allows users to use funds raised regardless of it whether or not the campaign reaches its funding goal. PledgeMusic caters directly to musicians and bands, and it also "encourage(s) all the artists" to "donate a percentage of their project funds to a charity of their choice" (Pledge Music) . GoFundMe is strictly donation based funding and deals primarily with personal needs. Despite their distinctions, the general process of each platform is similar: Campaigns are established and constructed within the platform website and includes the description of the object being funded and offers a biographical or narrative component designed to connect with would-be contributors, a price point structure that provides contributors with multiple options for donation amounts, and the selection of a time frame for the campaign. Most campaigns include an essay along with multiple forms of content, i.e. testimonial videos, stream-able demo songs, pictures, etc. Once launched, it is up to whomever launched the campaign to maintain and promote it. This process typically plays out across social media outlets through daily postings, encouragement for supporters to share the

campaign with their respective social networks, and increasing visibility by posting on other artists' social media accounts. It is the rather simple and finite aspect of CF that explains one aspect of its popularity. However, its perceived simplicity may also be indicative of CF's processes as part of a neoliberal framework. Indeed, CF is both a product and symptom of neoliberal logic that music industries have quickly adapted.

This critical positioning of CF as an instantiation of neoliberalism is important as it recognizes two things. First, and most importantly, the detachment of the artist from historical institutions of support (namely labels and publishers) and the encouragement to become "entrepreneurial." Secondly, it reaffirms that musical recordings are able to retain a commodity status as they move through a period of rapid depreciation and the possibility that they become free. Indeed, when understood as a commodity, music exemplifies a unique instance that evokes very fundamental questions of value and evaluation. What is it, specifically, that makes music so valuable? And how do those conceptions of value translate to, and operate as, "use value" or "exchange value?" CF, in the form analyzed in this study, emerged in the midst of a substantial shift ongoing in the music industries that, in many ways, reflect of the neoliberal process. Generally speaking, developments in communicative technologies and associated communicative practices opened new ways to access, produce, and acquire music. While long standing modes of production sought constrain the free exchange of music between peers (as they've done in the past when new technologies threaten their control of content), the software industry saw an opportunity in this practice.

In the wake of the music industry's re-structuring, the ability to negotiate both the decrease in revenues from traditional channels (i.e. record royalties) and the increasing limitations placed on artist agency (both creative and financial), CF has emerged and is

positioned as an "opportunity" for musicians and bands to finance their own projects without the constraints typically associated third party intermediaries. Indeed, this "new liberty" is not just an opportunity found. As mentioned above, by detaching them from labels and publishers CF both encourages and necessitates that artists take on many of the responsibilities that were before handled by intermediaries. Traditionally, the artist's limited communication with the fan was bracketed from the "business" aspects of being a professional musician. This shift held consequential implications for fan and artist relations. It is now possible, and advantageous, for the artist to interact with fans more frequently and more directly than ever before, so much so that it has arguably become a necessary part of the artist's role. Nancy Baym (2015) refers to this interaction a "market relationship," which she describes as "regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work." This particularly useful term connects the social components fostered through communicative technologies with the interest of capital which is, of course, necessary in order to sustain oneself as an artist.

This dynamic provided a means by which the artist and fan could come together in general and spirited disavowal of large scale corporate music industries, and in addition, it reinforced the narrative that reflects the "ideology of the autonomous artist," i.e., a "myth sustained by the continued marginal existence of cultural producers, and by the persistence and proliferation of specialized arts institutions and personnel – publishers, agents, museum curators, arts editors, and even arts-funding bodies" (Wolff, 1987).

In this logic CF is a process that both reflects and shifts multiple responsibilities onto both artists and fans. The destruction, or rather, the deconstruction of the music industries has given rise to innovative means in the production (re: creation) and dissemination of cultural content. However, this "innovation" obscures the fact that both production and dissemination is

now the responsibility of fan and artist. This represents the most interesting set of questions for this study, i.e. how do artists themselves conceive of their role and identity in relation to the operative contingencies at play in CF? How do they navigate the lines established in "market relationships," in the specific context of a CF campaign? How does this inform their obligation to responsibility in relation to the high degree of autonomy provided through CF platforms?

Review of Literature

CF is a relatively new phenomena both informed and problematized by long running questions concerning neoliberalism, culture industries, cultural commoditization, and art cultures. Thus, in order to establish an operative framework for this study, it is helpful to address critical foundations already in place to help locate and understand our current context.

Music fan communities are informed by various discourses that reflect cultural practices that play an instrumental role in how music is interpreted and evaluated (Frith, 1996). In particular, notions such as "authenticity" and "integrity" represent important yet distinct meanings across musical genres. These concepts extend into modes of production and consumption as well. Importantly, CF emerged in time of crisis for the music industry in which those modes of production and consumption were in flux. As sales declined in the wake of the development of communicative web technologies which allowed music to be shared for free amongst consumers, it engendered the collapse of the "object based" (Anderson, 2013) economy necessitated a restructuring. Notably, this restructuring is occurring within a consumer culture colonized by digital technologies. Indeed, it is against digital culture and fan culture that CF must be analyzed, as the mechanism itself emerged within a prolific era of social network technologies which pervaded modes of production and socio-cultural practices.

The topic of CF itself has received scholarly interest in recent years, but most analyses approach the mechanism from a business or marketing standpoint. An important study from Belleflamme, Lambert, and Schwienbacher (2013) looks at the impact CF could have for "managerial decisions in the early development stage of firms, when the entrepreneurial need to build a community of individuals with whom he or she must interact." Mollick (2013) analyzes the "underlying dynamics of success and failure among CF ventures," in order to examine "the ways that the actions of founders may affect their ability to receive entrepreneurial financing." Elsewhere, Guidici, Nava, Lamastra, and Verecondo (2013) offer a comparative study between CF and "other financing forms" and developing a "taxonomy of business forms."

Other studies have examined the process of CF itself in order to understand what makes one campaign more successful than other. Mitra and Gilbert (2014) look at the rhetoric of CF campaigns to examine whether or not there were recognizable rhetorical distinctions between successful and failed campaigns. Their findings conclude that campaigns that employ the idea of social identity, participation, and exclusivity are more successful than those that do not. Gerbert and Hui (2013) conducted a qualitative study that looks at "independent creators and supporters who use CF platforms," in order to "gain a better understanding of community." This research offers an extensive and thorough analysis examining the motivations and deterrents which are associated with establishing and supporting a campaign. This particular analysis takes a step back to critically examine how CF functions within the current neoliberal framework.

Academia and popular press have been relatively slow to assume a role critical of CF. Notable exceptions are Bennett, Chin, and Jones (2015), who have begun compiling essays and articles that offer a critical cultural analysis of CF However, there has been an abundance of media coverage. As CF became more popular it came under heavier scrutiny. The campaigns of

Amanda Palmer, Zach Braff, and Spike Lee for example, evoked a criticism that began a large-scale questioning about the ethical implications of CF after certain facets of the campaign came to light. Regardless of the "wrongness" or "rightness" of these campaigns, the critical attention they have garnered reflects an ethical ambiguity associated with the practices of CF. Reflections of these anxieties are displayed in numerous web articles which have been published in recent years focused on issues such as consumer rights (Gera, 2012), research and development for corporations (Gera, 2013; Leonard, 2014;), financed campaigns which don't follow through on promises (Moss, 2014), and questions over who should utilize CF (2013, G.F). As CF becomes more popular in ever growing fields of interest (re: politics, academia, museums, education costs, medical costs), more unique problems and opportunities will only increase.

CF's popularity among musicians is reflective of the decline in sales revenue and the uncertainty which has plagued the music industry in recent years, a shift that has been widely documented (Anderson, 2014; Hiat & Serpick, 2007). As Anderson points, what is evolving in this shift are "standards of practice." That is, in the wake of this shift, those practices associated with more traditional modes of both production and consumption are giving way to a paradigmatic void shot through with new and evolving practices (e.g. home recording, digital performances social media campaigns, YouTube, digital retail outlets, and CF). CF provides an opportunity for musicians to do, in part, what they've always wanted to do (i.e. record and release music), which up until recently was typically accomplished through recording contract.

While these standards of *practice* may be evolving, the meanings that these practices, in part, both curated and answered to still inform music culture, i.e. creation, production, identity, and consumption. Underlying the narratives of expression and motivation which informs this process is the notion of authenticity. In *Performance Rites* (1996), Simon Frith argues that

"critical music judgments are...almost always entangled with social explanations" (pg. 70), a fact that inevitably leads to questions of authenticity. Music deemed inauthentic or authentic is judged as such based not solely on production, but rather "a more inchoate feature of the music itself, a perceived quality of sincerity and commitment" that Frith claims is "obviously related to the ways in which we judge people's sincerity generally; it is a human as well as musical judgment" (pg. 71). For example, Matt Stahl (2013) discusses the popularity of Fox's *American Idol* and how its success is related to how the show's contestants are characterized through "nourishing the bonds between performers and audiences through reference to social positions." The subjective identification between contestants and viewers appeals to viewers' desire for participant validation. In other words, the show's producers strategically position contestants who perform "being 'real' in front of the cameras." To quote Stahl, "This is a proof of honesty, and the persistent gaze of the camera provides one way of guaranteeing that 'realness'" (Stahl 2013). Similarly, speaking about CF, Gehring and Wittkower (2015) recognize the "strong ethical implication that underscores the process," and "employment of appeals to community and the inclusion of biographical narration in the campaign" (pg. 74). Indeed, bound up in popular music culture there is always negotiation of authenticity that may differ from genre to genre, yet can never be ignored. Stahl succinctly expresses this social obligation: "Popular music's democratic promis–-linked notions and discourses of equal opportunity, social mobility, and self-developmen–-is what makes discourses of authenticity around popular music so powerfully relevant in a postmodern, and even in a postrock, scene" (Stahl 2013).

  Trends and meanings bound up within music fandom are always inextricably related to questions regarding the music industry. CF emerges in a time of crisis, and as such, represents an intersection of "autonomous art" and industry. The paradoxical dichotomy of the title of Stahl's

book, *Unfree Masters*, reflects Jacques Attali's (1985) characterization of the modern musician: "Even though the modern musician, because he is more abstract, gives the appearance of being more independent of power and money than his predecessors, he is, quite the opposite, more tightly tied in with institutions of power than ever before" (Attali, 1985, pg. 116). Attali's text theorizes that shifts in musical practice (industry and form) foreshadow shifts in the political economy at large. As such, he analyzes the dynamic of music industry, meaning, and valorization. Repeatedly addressed by Attali is the problem of demand and value. Through his claim that "outside of a ritual context or a spectacle, the music object has no value in itself" (pg. 106), he locates a salient component of the contemporary crisis. If the musical object has no value, then the commodification and monetization of musical objects is vulnerable, and must adjust, to cultural shifts that challenge standards of practice which often inform valuations associated with production and consumption.

Digital technologies and the so-called "web 2.0" era has brought Attali's claims about value to the fore. Throughout shifts in modes of consumption and production have both evolved and struggled with the development and increasing ubiquity of personalized networked technologies. Entailed in this shift is the emergence of the "end user" (Anderson, 2014), which should be understood in distinction to the consumer. The affordances (Gibson, 1977) of networked technologies seized upon by users engendered an industrial shift which moved power away from their long established centers (i.e. record labels) into the hands the tech industry. This process and its attendant developments have laid the groundwork for emergent music streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music that have provided a strategic answer to modes of consumption and production that have shifted away from an objects and to one oriented to the production of ubiquitous networks and data.

CF functions within, and profits from, this particular space. The ease of production fostered through developments in digital and web technologies, along with the social opportunities provided through those technologies, which fill gaps created in the wake of the industrial shift, are seized upon by eager artists. CF provides an opportunity to both fund a musical project, but almost just as importantly, the opportunity to create a narrative of "emancipation and entrepreneurship" out of the crisis itself. This process reflects Attali's recognition of a "crisis of proliferation" (pg. 45, 130; 1985) characterized in part by a new freedom from the reliance on third party intermediaries. In this loss there is a chance to create new meanings. CF functions and profits, within a space characterized by "the crisis of proliferation" and relative freedom from the reliance on third party intermediaries in which "the loss of meaning becomes the absence of imposed meaning" (Attali, 1985, pg. 45). This dynamic facilitates valuations and marketing practices that seek to capitalize on experiential, rather than physical, goods in the hope of offering the consumer that which is "invaluable."

New Economic Mode

It is important to note that Attali recognizes the "persistence of institutions of power despite the perception of artist autonomy." This recognition tacitly underscores how modes of production have always informed the perceptions and images associated with art as a means of publicity. In capitalist cultures this is oriented around issues of publicity and the market, i.e. marketing. Theodor Adorno's (1991/1944) conceptualization of "the culture industry" establishes a theoretical framework that analyzes, in part, the process Attali examines. Throughout, Adorno is concerned with what he sees as a "commercial necessity" that utilizes negotiations and manipulations of identity and mass culture. Furthermore, this necessity "leads to a manipulation of taste and the official culture's pretense of individualism" (Adorno, 199, pg.

40). Thus, institutions of power are understood as being directly involved in the creation or appropriation of narratives that nurture a social relation associated with autonomy and independence. Central to the interest of this research is Adorno's claim that "the entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms" (pg. 99). This *transfer* is of direct interest to this research because of the degree to which CF is vulnerable to and/or complicit in this superimposition of profit motives and the strategic and manipulative marketing ploys that go along with it. Is CF able to insulate itself from the constraints it seeks to avoid, such as creative control, exploitation, and extortion? In other words, what are the potential implications if CF were to emerge as a new standard practice around which other practices became focused? To understand CF as mode of production in and of itself rather than a parenthetical or bracketed means to an end necessitates questions of capital flow, corporate harvesting, and marketing and locates it within evaluative discussions of music cultures and ideologies.

The theoretical criticisms put forth by Adorno became especially useful as the development and expansion of neoliberalism that began in the 1970s acquired more influence. At its core neoliberalism is an economic theory rooted in free market capitalism. It is a term with many working definitions (Omi & Winant, 1985; Gilbert, 2013; Thorson & Lie, 2006), although for the purpose of this research, I will refer to David Harvey's (2005) succinct characterization: a logic "seeking to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (pg. 3)[1]. In this definition, the neoliberal project mobilizes a Gramscian notion of "common sense" (Jones, 2006) in order to construct a sense in which those governed consent to free up private and state institutions from any obligations to provide cradle-to-grave security in exchange for loyalty to

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[1] Harvey connects this logic to driving an "intense interest in and pursuit of information technologies" and an emergence of an "information society."

the employer (e.g. stable salaries, employee benefits and protection, etc.). In particular neoliberalism places great emphasis on the principle of individual freedoms that Harvey argues, "can be mobilized to mask other realities" (Harvey, 2007, pg. 39). This emphasis is utilized in an emancipatory rhetoric that essentially redefines insecurity (e.g. reduction of employee benefits and/or institutional support, unpredictable work schedules, outsourcing of labor) as "freedom" and employs that re-characterization to justify, if not gain support, for actions and policies which have a negative effect on subordinates. Applying the neoliberal framework set out by Harvey to CF allows us to critically assess the process from two positions — the artist and the fan. While the artist is liberated from the constraints of a record label, s/he then is obliged to embrace an emancipation which results in more work, more risk, and other sources of finance. The fan becomes the transferee of financial risk through the "opportunity" to fund an idea not yet realized. Entangled within this dynamic is a consistent and necessary narrative framing that "masks" the reality that reveals a shift of institutionalized power, rather than a liberation from those powers.

Methodology

This study followed a three step process. The first segment positioned the topic within a relevant theoretical framework in order to emphasize the ideological, industrial, and cultural contexts that inform the discussion and give rise to the questions at hand.

The second phase of this research included the administration of a survey to a sample of current professional, semi-professional, and amateur musicians within my immediate and extended networks within the United States. Many of these musicians have experienced various music cultures and their attendant institutional cultures (i.e. major and independent record labels). The survey consisted of ten questions designed to gather both demographic and

geographic data, general information about the participants' respective musical genres, and a very basic valuation their experience with CF on a scale of 1-10.

Once the survey data has been gathered and categorized, those participants who indicated that they would be amenable then participated in a more thorough interview conducted over the phone or using Skype. The questions asked built upon those used in the survey and inquire into more detailed personal accounts regarding their experiences and opinions of CF, and their conceptions of meaning associated with the process (i.e. cultural commitments, value negotiations, fan interactions). The survey data and interview content was analyzed and referenced against the theoretical framework laid out in the first chapter in order to identify patterns of association, conceptions of artistic and individual identity, and modes of practice as consistent with and/or diverging from, what is suggested in theory. Through this analysis, I aimed to conceptualize the various modes and conditions of engagement by artists in CF platforms in order to identify ideological and rhetorical mechanisms reflective of the neoliberal philosophy. Musicians are uniquely positioned within neoliberalism in that representations of autonomy and individuality stand as foundations of neoliberalism and are celebrated as markers of "authenticity" within art worlds.

Additionally, I drew on my own experience in both CF and the music industry. As a result, I bring numerous pre-conceptions of the study, and an experiential knowledge. I began playing music professionally in 2003 and I am currently a member of a music group named MAE. I have CF my own musical project entitled Demons, and I am close colleagues with others who have done so as well. Over the years, I have worked with major and independent music labels, managers, lawyers, and booking agents. My time spent under contract with the major record label Capitol Records included more than one large corporate acquisition that directly

effected our situation at the label. My personal history within the music industries motivates and informs my interest in this topic. I remain interested in the topic and have experienced a variety of industrial and cultural settings related to music and music performance.

Summary

This study utilizes qualitative analyses to explore the use of CF among professional, semi-professional, and amateur musicians. The current environment contextualized by the paradigmatic shift of the music industries and the communicative and productive capabilities within digital culture constitutes a potentially transformative space in the wake of neoliberalism. The function and logic of CF (i.e. a means of exchange and production that signals a decentralization and reorientation of industries) empower musicians by providing autonomy and control. Yet, this arrangement is simultaneously vulnerable to third party appropriation (i.e. a neo-colonization of industry that takes advantage of this shift) and ideologically disguised instances of consumer disempowerment that potentially threatens to neutralize its disruptive potential. Ethical negotiations, conceptions of artistic performance and identity, and shifting boundaries of fan/artist interaction contextualize this space as well.

CHAPTER 2

A CRITICAL THEORIZATION OF CROWDFUNDING

This chapter lays out a critical theorization of CF. It is constituted by three main areas of focus and the chapter is divided as such. It first identifies two contextual characteristics – stability and uncertainty – to establish the backdrop within which the industrial and cultural values inhering in music operate. It then discusses the importance of cultural commitments in music communities and argues that CF fosters the negotiations of these commitments in relation to the CF process itself. It then explores the influence of neoliberalism on the industrial and cultural environment out of which, and through which, CF emerged and functions. Finally, I draw out the "de-industrialization" of the music industries that has occurred over the last decade. This final section specifically addresses how recent changes in the music industries have dislodged long established relations of cost and value. Here, the term "value" refers to material value and cultural values and commitments which will be discussed below. It argues that these three components bear upon one another, aggravating cultural commitments within an industrial crisis against which the artist negotiates. The results of which are uniquely instantiated and reflected in CF campaigns.

To put forth a critical theorization of CF, it is helpful to recognize and acknowledge those characteristics and phenomena particularly unique to music that become mobilized in ways directly related to the practice and ideology of CF. Those characteristics and phenomena are encompassed in a field of both stability and uncertainty. These two foundational characteristics of the current cultural and industrial environment – stability and uncertainty, and the space opened up in the wake of these relatively recent changes in associated practices (i.e. music production, music consumption, and fan/artist interactions and relationships) constitutes and

nurtures a dynamic flux of various players (musicians, fans, and media/tech entities) largely characterized by evaluative negotiations – both cultural and economic. It is this dynamic that relates uniquely to the use of CF as a mobilization of cultural ethos and pathos, and an exploitation of the re-negotiations of values and conceptions of values brought upon by the paradigm shift in question.

The stability referred to above is evidenced by the fact that music and its socially organizing and meaning making function, particular for modern and contemporary forms of popular music, is essential. As such, the variations of ways in which music has and continues to be engaged, utilized, appropriated, produced, or commodified – and the panics associated with each–- do not reflect the degree of a particular era's love or appreciation of music. Rather, they often reflect shifting modes of production, consumption, and engagement brought forth through social and cultural change. Particular to our current "web 2.0" environment, we can see this tendency exemplified in panics centered around digital piracy (Stolarz, 2010) or the crisis of millennial culture and their technological dependence (Anderson & Lee, 2012) . As it regards music and music culture, this is often exemplified in reductive criticisms over the "state of pop music" and big data (Knibbs 2013), so-called declines in craft and composition (Eveleth, 2012), and new modes of consumption that some warn reflect a lack of focus (Gherini, 2016). Importantly, these forms of criticism are often motivated by, or reflective of, a lack of awareness that is coupled with strong cultural or ethical commitments informed and expressed within specific genres. But this must be challenged with a historical understanding of the relevant phenomena in order productively examine that which is unique to a historical context. The role of music in cultures is a constant throughout modern history, what changes is how music is

understood and ways in which it is engaged. As Attali (1985) writes, "music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society (pg. 5).

The other foundational component to maintain moving forward in this study is the current state of uncertainty that characterizes the music industries. This uncertainty generally revolves around modes of production, which encompasses questions of value, new modes of distribution, efficient or "fair" monetization, consumer and artist incentive. For the artist, what lies the heart of this uncertainty centers on the break down of the traditional record label process. In its simplest form, this process includes signing a band to a record label, recording an album that is financed and promoted by the record label with the band or artist going on tour to promote the record. Up until the early millennium, this process was built around selling music-oriented objects, namely records, CDs and other types of physical merchandise at regional, national and international markets. Wrapped up in that process was a myriad of players, each of whom represented different financial interests and provided differing services to help sell the goods in question. To be sure, this system became deeply entrenched and in many cases led to the exploitation of artists who had very little financial knowledge and experience. Thus, in one sense, the industry crises that emerged in the wake of the development of digital communication technologies was substantially liberating for the artist. However, that liberation also extended to a consumer who is now able to access music at a steeply reduced cost, if not for free. It is this condition that presents new problems for both artists and corporate interests. I refer to this contemporary state as one of "crisis" strictly in the Kuhnian sense of the word (Kuhn 1962): a transitional period between two industrial paradigms. While there has been a definite decline in record sales, it could safely be assumed that for many mid-and low-level artists, this would not present too much of a recognizable change. Indeed, for many artists this crisis has opened up

new opportunities to work independently of certain third party intermediaries, reclaim autonomy and agency, and possess control of over music production, presentation, and dissemination. Despite the continuing existence and attempts on the behalf of record labels to adjust to this crisis, the multitudinous software platforms that emerged to both innovate and capitalize on consumer "needs," and the cheaper and more convenient means of music production which reduced the need for proper recording studios, the artist still finds him/herself in a crisis – well beyond the prior paradigm, yet still unsettled on a new one to take its place.

Indeed, both musicians and music fans find themselves in an interesting dynamic constituted by sometimes opposing/countering, forces – between stability and uncertainty. First, the stability or reliability of music's influential social role throughout history serves to reassure interested parties (in this case I'm referring to corporate interests) of its social value, i.e. a value that can be translated into monetary value. However, music's reliability in this manner is countered by a substantial uncertainty brought about by new technologies and practices that have substantially disrupted the previous industrial paradigm. This is important because it provides a dynamic that allows the industrial or commercial interests to appropriate an ideology of the""autonomous artist" that has long informed our operative understanding of, or engagement with, art and music cultures. That is, corporate interests can commodify the already well established and celebrated cultural values of music and the arts in general, which remain stable despite market flux. Indeed, this mode of marketing commodification isn't unique to our current era. Although, as control over modes of production are shifted away from more traditional third party intermediaries and into the hands newly emerging third party intermediaries and individual artists, those roles previously delineated by record labels and management firms fall increasingly onto the single artist. This shift also reorients the artist's social role. Heightened fan and artist

interaction facilitated through communicative technologies and social media platforms re-organizes social boundaries. In addition, this new engagement is essentially necessitated by this evolving industrial and cultural climate.

The dynamic of the stability of music's cultural presence and influence set against the contemporary uncertainty of the music industries constitutes a time of crisis in which the latter must find new ways to capitalize upon the former if it wishes to retain standards of practice which secure market control. That process is complicated by new opportunities for artists and other corporate interests that arise from both cultural ideologies (such as Neoliberalism and the "autonomous artist") and technological developments.

Cultural And Ethical Blueprints

If you click on the "About" section of the Kickstarter website, it displays a brief and stylized summation and representation of an ideal culture from which Kickstarter draws, and helps to further expand. Establishing themselves in 2015 as a "Benefit Corporation", Kickstarter defines their mission as "commitments to arts and culture, making our values core to our operations, fighting inequality, and helping creative projects come to life." Thus, written directly into their mission statement, they emphasize arts, culture, and values. Indiegogo, another popular CF platform, emphasizes their goal to "empower everyone" to "change the world" through a facilitation of both "small and personal", or "large and mainstream campaigns."

These types of appeals, either directly or implicitly, reflect the integral function that operative conceptions of value play in the CF process. It is important to critically explore what is meant when Kickstarter claims that part of their mission is to "fight inequality." Furthermore, we need to inquire into those "values" that are so core to their mission. In the case of Kickstarter and

Indiegogo, neither platform describes those values with any degree of detail. For example, how is it that Indiegogo provides "empowerment?" Is it simply a financial empowerment that opens up opportunity to change the world? Or is it through a notion of community? We can gain more insight into this question if we consider Kickstarter's "About" section in one of its previous forms when it used terms such as "democratic," "magical," describing backing a project as," more than just giving someone money, it's supporting their dream," and that donations allowed access into a "club of art supporting fanatics" (Gehring, Wittkower, 2015). It is clear that this process is characterized in an ideational way, strategically neglecting to make any reference towards cost or profits. Instead, it frames this service as a collective and ambitious effort that seeks to better the world through the arts. Promotion and marketing of commodities through an appeal to pathos is nothing unique to CF. Adorno, as mentioned before, has argued that the culture industry transfers the "profit motive naked onto cultural forms" (Adorno, 1991). Framed in this way, CF campaigns reflect what Zizek has referred to as "cultural capitalism…in which consumers believe they are acting morally and more meaningfully by consuming commodities that are deemed goods for the public good" (Zizek, 1999). Further, the industrial context within which CF emerges offers up a neoliberal narrative that functions to re-orient the artist position and the fan/artist dynamic. The shifting of responsibilities on to the artist him or herself engenders the perception of understanding and identification with the fan that is rooted in the awareness of mutual limitations and obstacles that lie in the way of "dreams""

The framing of CF as a culturally-motivated process applied to the whole range of ideas it is utilized to help realize does little to fully recognize how more specific, or specifically understood, cultural values are mobilized in regards to the creation of musical objects. How can the creation of a record or CD be thought to change the world? If drawing from varying and

multiple regions of the United States, or even the world, what does it mean to enter into a "club of art supporting fanatics?" These questions necessitate an inquiry into the historical lineage of these values to identify how they have come to be associated with arts and how the reflect contemporary associations between the artistic object and the artistic process, and the communities which give meanings to that dynamic.

Both Attali and Wolff trace popular romantic conceptions of the artist back to a shift in the role of music in society, and the emergence of market capitalism. As the production and performance of music began to break from its previous role in service of the state, or the church, it facilitated two important developments in relation to this research. First, it assumed a new ideological function. Attali writes: "The domestic, knowing that he could be begin to depend on other economic forces than the courts, wanted to be done with this double language of order and subversion. The philosophers of the eighteenth century, moreover, provided a political ally and ideological foundation for the revolt of the artist against his guardian, for the will to *artistic autonomy"* [emphasis mine] (Attali, 1985, pg. 49). At this stage in history we see a characterization of the artist that plays a fundamental role in the ethos of CF, i.e. autonomy. This autonomy emerged out of social and political transitions. As the economic conditions evolved, the artist could now imagine himself an independent entity. Elsewhere, Attali references the jongleur as a representative figure of the Middle Ages. As music composition and performance became separated from the church and state service, "the church condemned him…he had no fixed employment, he moved from place to place, offering his services in private residences. He was the music and the spectacle of the body. He alone created it, carried it with him, and completely organized its circulation" (Attali, 1985, pg. 14). These developments are the foundations of our contemporary conception of the artist and connect to our current obsession

with notions of artistic authenticity. It also connects to a particular ontology that is characterized by the amalgamation of art and artist in which the artistic object is understood as a direct and unmediated extension of the artist him or herself, free of any strategic performance employed to construct representations.

Second, this development paves the way for the continued commodification of music. Since the demise of State forms of welfare, musicians have searched for an opportunity and a consequent need to finance his or her existence and work without the aid of the State. The question of how to monetize art reveals the peculiar character of the musical object as a commodity. As this pertains to the emergence and mobilization of cultural or communal commitments as marketing mechanisms, we can again look to Attali: "In order for music to become institutionalized as a commodity, for it to acquire an autonomous status and monetary value, the labor of the creation and interpretation of music had to be assigned a value" (Attali, 1985, pg. 51). This claim touches on two integral components involved in how music fans critically and culturally engage their experience with spectacle (live concerts) or the object (records, CDs, or band t-shirts). The assignment of value to the "labor of creation" and the "interpretation of music" constitutes a mutually contingent dynamic. Janet Wolff writes:

> The actual situation of the artist/author from the mid-nineteenth century helped to produce the myth that art is an activity which transcends the social. In the twentieth century, this myth has been sustained by the continued marginal existence of cultural producers, and by the persistence and proliferation of specialized institutions and personnel (pg. 3).

Here Wolff points to the work of cultural producers who, however motivated, help sustain the myth of the romantic artist because the cultural producers who generate rhetoric that plays into

aesthetic and ethical evaluations that are deployed in both critical evaluations of music and artists, and marketing. Simon Frith argues that the music critic is integral in this discourse, and he or she plays a number of roles that are generally similar to a form of mediation between artist and consumer. However, regardless of how this role may vary, Frith identifies consistent themes: the critic nurtures a "collusion between selected musicians and an equally select part of the public" (i.e. community formations and negotiations) and the critical assessment of music in terms of "ethical judgments." In this sense, music critics often initiate "critical music judgments [that] are almost always entangled with social explanations of why the music is good or bad" (Frith, 1996, pg. 70). Importantly, to understand critical music judgments that function within a framework of "cultural value judgments" that specifically reflect the "social contexts in which they are made," and we must "understand the appropriate time and *place* [emphasis mine] to voice such judgments" (Frith, 1996, pg. 22). We can look to Adorn''s critique of commercial jazz music as an example of this. His claim that, "the *unreal* (emphasis mine) edifice…of jazz, is hammered into them by the entrepreneurs to make them think that they are on the inside," and that "their ecstasy is without content" (Adorno, 1991) is a critique of the form of commercial jazz music as a representation of mass cultural manipulation. As such, an enjoyment of commercial jazz is not merely a flaw in taste, but also represents a cultural lack. Recent criticisms of Macklemor''s song""White Privilege II are as focused on the rapper's subject position as a white male hip hop artist and what it means to rap about white privilege as the song itself. One review reads:

> By releasing this""son"" at this particular junction of the national discussion and his own
>
> fame, Macklemore, by the grace of the white supremacy he calls out by name, moves

from being an object of the conversation to a contributor to the discourse in a way that's

not always granted to Black and marginalized voices in this country. (ex, 2016)

These reviews are cited to exemplify Frith's claim that critical judgments of popular music are

rarely focused merely on the form, but often critically asses the song's place within a cultural

context according to sets of cultural values informed by those contexts.

At the very core of these judgments are conceptions of authenticity. Treatments and

explorations of authenticity in relation to the arts are often guilty of using the term rather loosely

without offering a definition or general idea of the term. To avoid this pitfall, this notion should

be understood as an evaluative mechanism that offers *operative* understandings. As such, these

understandings vary depending on what is being discussed. For example, if authenticity is meant

to refer to an unmediated expression of oneself into song, then it would be easy to argue that Bob

Dylan or Woody Guthrie is more authentic than Madonna or Prince. However, this evaluation

reveals a presupposition that excludes many other relevant factors in relation to how art, artistic

process, artistic intent, and an artist can be interpreted. Indeed, in popular music every genre

comes with a set of evaluative criteria that can change from period to period and place to place

for what should be and shouldn't be considered authentic. The contingent nature of the

definitions makes it such that "authenticity," while often implied as "an absolute", is ultimately

something, as Barker notes, "that can never be fully attained, a quest…which has inspired

countless musicians to make heartfelt and groundbreaking music" despite the simultaneous and

provocative claim that there "is no distinction between the real and the fake" (Barker 2007). The

constant negotiations and contingencies that come into play when achieve authenticity are bound

within strategic performance and representation that undermine its own effort. Understood in this

way, claims to authenticity are perfect marketing mechanisms because they are often non-

falsifiable and exist as a phantom concept that is vulnerable to various strategies of appropriation. In this fashion "authenticity" is a modular term that associates horizontally, and varies depending on cultural or critical contexts and discursive intent.

In this way a rhetoric of authenticity functions well with in a neoliberal environment. This is particularly the case in CF campaigns that mobilize cultural values in order to encourage contributions. For CF, it is especially advantageous if not necessary to appropriate cultural commitments because in many cases what is being solicited is not yet produced and exists only as an idea or a "dream." Thus, campaigns relegate the financial needs that necessitate the campaign as an unfortunate obligation reflective of a world indifferent to "authentic" cultural production. Therein lies an interesting contradiction that informs the whole of the CF exchange. The foundational problem that CF seeks to address is a financial one, i.e. providing new ways for artists to fund their creative projects. Thus, while financial need is often quickly mentioned before moving on to more lofty rhetoric of "the gift of music," "companionship," "hospitality," "love and gratitude," and independence (Forlorn Strangers) , it simultaneously represents the most foundational and consistent reason for the campaigns to be launched. To be sure, this study does not mean to suggest that the substantial appeals to ethos and pathos in drawing donations do not *also* function affectively for both fan and artist. Indeed, the affective characteristics associated with music fandom can not be disavowed and questions of fan exploitation often fail to take into account the importance of music as an experience. The experience of music is not limited to seeing a concert, buying an album, or downloading songs from iTunes. It could be argued that the experience is not able to bracketed according to any one particular activity, but rather, it reflects the priorities of the fan, which are often informed by their own lived experience. Notably, this disposition is culturally informed and regulated, and as such,

appropriated in a rhetoric that draws from those values with the intent of motivating fans to donate.

The musician's perception as "authentic," is often curated and sustained through a number of ways such as performance, promotion strategies, or style of dress. Musicians also express authenticity through communication with fans, whether it be in person at concerts, or over social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, or CF platforms. Indeed, one of the reasons this perception of authenticity is nurtured is due to its marketing value. Because CF sits at an intersection of affect and monetization it is useful to draw from Nancy Baym's concept of relational labor to better understand how the former is related to the latter. Baym's reason for framing "the maintenance of relationships" as a kind of labor stems not only from "higher expectations of engagement" on the behalf of fans but also from these relationships economic potential. Baym writes, "In addition to creating affective responses through the immaterial labor of making music, as expectations shifted toward more audience engagement, producing economically valuable feelings increasingly requires offering a continuous identity and interactive presence both in and through social media" (Baym 2015). The direct relationship between affective relationships and economic exchange represents both the appeal and vulnerability of CF. While "market relationships" help characterize the relational labor that is associated with CF, it is important to acknowledge that there exists a significant distinction between the relational labor of CF and the relational labor Baym discusses. Where the latter refers to a relationship in which "connecting with audiences may be expected, but it is rarely directly compensated," and seen as "an investment toward building and maintaining an audience that will sustain a career" (Baym 2015); the CF campaign is time sensitive and utilized directly to fund the production of a particular project. As such, the relationship nurtured by a CF

campaign is much more vulnerable to a scrutiny that drives a closer examination of the rhetoric employed, the cultural values they draw upon, and the actions of the campaign organizer in relation to the what is promised to those who donate.

This particular emphasis on the CF as a mechanism to fund a particular29reativ*t* is important: if donors perceive a campaign is taking advantage of the CF exchange (i.e. asking for too much money, asking money for the wrong things), it exposes the ethical blind spots that are obscured by the ideational aspects of CF. Identifying those campaigns that have somehow violated the tacit aforementioned cultural commitments that give meaning to the campaign reveals two important things. First, it is that these betrayals[2] may vary from campaign to campaign and from donor to donor. Second, it reminds us that tacit commitments remain influential despite the widespread changes brought about by the development of communicative technologies, or web 2.0. Specifically, changes that reflect, in the broad sense, theorizations of the modern/postmodern shift proposed by Swyngedouw (1986), Bauman's theory of *Liquid Modernity* (2000), and in Rainie & Lee's *Networked* (2014). That is, a shift towards an emphasis on the networked individual who moves freely between various communities according to goals and ambitions, an emphasis on mobility and flexibility, job demarcation, cultural fragmentation, adaptation, free enterprise, and entrepreneurialism. In addition, the shrinking of time and space facilitated by the increasing presence and use of digital communicative technologies, which can alter or bring about new meanings, understandings, and values that inform and infuse virtual communities. Indeed, that is not to imply that spatiality no longer informs our social relations,

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[2] Betrayals within the CF exchange refer to obvious transgressions such as abandonment of a project after the financial contributions are secured, or more ethically ambiguous behavior such as selling the finished product to a major record label. This latter instance is referenced in interview seven included in the appendix.

but rather, to acknowledge the expansive capabilities provided by internet technologies. Thus, while cultural values long associated with art communities and genres do still inform participation, the fields in which they operate have been greatly expanded through internet technologies and de-contextualized as a result of a more expansive range of community interaction and the interaction of different communities.

The essential thing to emphasize is that any critical theorization put forth to address CF does not seek to make broad claims on the ethics of CF as they relate to a particular set of cultural values or commitments. Instead, this theorization must emphasize the multiplicity of cultural commitments that are mobilized, engaged, and weaponized in the wake of the CF exchange to reflect how it engages varied degrees of interpretations and meanings operative within music cultures.

Neoliberalism, Cultural Commitments, and Industry

While this study focuses on CF, the music industry, digital culture, and the relevant on-going changes occurring within, neoliberalism must be addressed when setting forth a critical theorization of CF due to the fact that it fostered an environment that ultimately gave rise to the problem CF addresses. Further, it is a neoliberal hegemony that informs common rhetorical or conceptual mechanisms with an operative meaning specific to art and music cultures.. This global economic project has substantially re-structured labor relations through a concerted effort to liberate market interests from state-imposed regulatory frameworks. Thus, at its most essential, it is an economic project interested in freeing up capital from the binds of the state with the intent of maximizing financial gain. In order to achieve this environment, neoliberalism requires the consent of populations to mobilize, or at least allow, politicians to implement the necessary fiscal policies. Considering the fact that, in many cases, neoliberal policies ultimately

threatened the financial and labor security of the very individuals whose support is needed to gain consent. To help achieve these goals, a substantial ideological framework is needed. Ultimately, this project has been successful and both the economic and ideological components of this philosophy are present in the current dominant economic logic that continually demand deregulation, the withdrawal of the State, and its attendant strategies to eliminate as much of the States' welfare programs as possible.

It is this environment in which CF both operates and is nurtured. As it relates to this particular study, neoliberalism exists at two levels, the macro and the micro, that work together to constitute the space within which CF plays out. For the purposes of this study, I focus mainly on the micro level of neoliberalism. By micro level, I mean the influence of neoliberalism on the developments and trends associated with digital culture in a post "web 2.0" environment, as well as the cultural dynamics which contextualize operative conceptions in art/music communities. However, a brief discussion of the macro level of neoliberalism is necessary to obtain a general understanding of the political, economic, and cultural mechanisms writ large mobilized to construct a "need" for neoliberal policies.

The success of the neoliberal project, as Harvey refers to it, is impressive in its reach and depth. Thus, when we talk about neoliberalism, we implicate a myriad of different discourses that understand it in slightly different ways. In the US context, one strategy of neoliberalism is its rearticulation of cultural principles that have become so embedded in certain aspects of American identity that they can hardly be argued, i.e. individual freedoms, work ethic and merit, equal treatment of and for individuals regardless of their socio-economic status. Illustrating how this re-articulation functions in the context of racial discrimination, Omi and Winant explain, "'reverse racism' was conceptualized as an issue of 'fairness,' thus rearticulating the central

tenets of the civil rights demands – equality and justice." Omi and Winant argue that this was an "ideological appeal…consistent with the anti-discrimination demands of the movement" (Omi & Winant, 2015). Despite this particular example concerning race, it stands as operative example of how neoliberalism appropriates concepts and terminology against the very movements that relied upon them and gave them cultural weight. These sentiments are made operative in numerous disciplines or discourses while rarely ever using the term "neoliberalism" itself. We can see the principle of "individual freedom" manifested in the support of independent contractors and outsourcing, and in terms such as "employee flexibility," i.e. the freedom to run one's life with less managerial structure, the ability to work from home, etc. Principles of an individual work ethic are mobilized to limit State regulations that address what neoliberal advocates view as systemic inequalities that place an unfair financial strain on employers. And famously, the ideal of the equal treatment of individuals is employed to nurture the idea of "colorblindness," and remove affirmative action policies established to address a lengthy history of racial discrimination. This short list of general examples is mentioned to exemplify the sophisticated manner in which these very agreeable ideals are utilized for the implantation of policies that seemingly, and in some ways can, benefit individuals. Indeed, it is important to emphasize that the appeals of neoliberalism do not necessarily exclude the middle class, or those in the lower socio-economic bracket. Though, those same advantages can simultaneously disempower individuals. "Employee flexibility" often involves the need to be available at all hours of the day and the lack of a routine schedule that is often needed to establish balance in one's life. An emphasis on "work ethic" often means the suspension of state welfare programs justified by notions of merit (i.e. if you don't work, you don't eat). The notions of "colorblindness" ignores a history of systemic racial oppression that prohibited racially marginalized populations from

achieving social mobility. As such, we can recognize the vulnerability of American populations when these terms are appropriated within cultural and socio-political discourses to advance policies that may work against their interest.

As it relates to the art world, there is certainly an extension of these ideals that have come to be closely associated with cultural critical discourses revolving around the evaluation of artistic process, production, commodification, and consumption, and as such, the art world is vulnerable to a neoliberal strategy that is able to re-articulate these cultural values in the service of the market.

There is a historic lineage that informs predominant understandings or conceptions of the "artist" that emerged from socio-political conditions dating back to the Middle Ages. Interestingly, the operative perceptions we have of the "romantic artist," i.e. the creative outcast devoted to ideals of beauty, creativity, economic integrity, egalitarian ethics, authenticity, etc., are largely constructs cherished and respected for myriad reasons often associated with artist and art communities. Although, these ideals are simultaneously appropriated, nurtured, and drawn upon in the marketing and promotion of art commodities in the market through the construction of artist bios, promotional photos that strategically utilize various aesthetics, or the highlighting of critical reviews. The trajectory of this lineage is worthy of study in and of itself, but for our purposes it is mentioned in order to help contextualize the entanglements of devotions to cultural values and market appropriations of those values to help sell music objects.

Specifically, CF represents a unique intersection of commerce and culture that before involved an infrastructure which housed various employees with specialized tasks. Where before the professional musician's business dealings were handled by third-party intermediaries (e.g. record label, publicists, managers) which provided an external target around which the artist and

fan communities could rally in solidarity against, thereby leaving cultural values and practices largely undisturbed. CF allows those third party intermediaries to be done away with, thus assigning (ideally) absolute autonomy to the artist. This shift reflects the neoliberal process as it embraces this longstanding tropes of the artist a lone, romantic spirit. These tropes largely espoused in CF rhetoric are not new ideals that have emerged in recent years nor are they uniquely related to CF, they are simply being mobilized in a new space, in new ways. Interestingly, the larger crisis of the music industries brought upon by developments in communication and music production technologies created new opportunities for both artists and fans. For the artist specifically, recording costs dropped dramatically and social media technologies provided more convenient ways to engage an already active fan community, or solicit new fans, which allowed the artist more opportunity, freedom, and autonomy than he or she would have had if there were large investors financing the endeavor. Of course, this new degree of autonomy comes with new constraints and obligations.

On this point, we can evaluate the development in two ways in relation to CF and neoliberalism. First, we can recognize that there is a new financial risk placed upon the artist as a result of this liberation from third party intermediaries. While he or she has more freedom and agency, expenses of time and money are no longer diffused over long term record deals (exploitative to be sure) and onto industry employees. Instead, those tasks and financial demands fall squarely on the artist. In addition, the artist loses a substantial degree of "job" security. In other words, despite the often problematic structure of major record label deals in terms of how the artist is ultimately treated, he or she was still supported in a way that allowed full devotion to that particular lifestyle and the demands associated with it such as having full access to a studio for three months and not having to worry about income, broken instruments, and other

distractions that otherwise arise daily. Simply put, the artist was able to devote him or herself full time to creativity free from financial pressures.

Secondly, there is a tension created within this dynamic that obscures labor demands behind the emancipatory rhetoric of neoliberalism. Put one way, the artist is now freed up from the stinted and bloated machinery of the major label system. In this rhetoric, he or she is no longer required to answer to the stereotypical culturally vapid, myopic, and greed-obsessed record executive. The artist regains control and can now create freely, as an individual. He or she can create an art object through which profits are channeled directly back, undiminished by a third party interest. At the same time, however, the artist is now responsible for all of those tasks once handled by those third parties. The benefits of that limited freedom experienced while participating in the major label system now becomes very visible. As such, the freedom and agency that comes with complete independence is once again constrained by the additional labor (unpaid and time consuming) the artist must take up in order to realize ambitions. Thus, there is a transfer of both autonomy and risk.

However, under the banner of neoliberalism these developments (whether negative or positive) are understood and celebrated as a *logical or neutral* good. That is, this shift in modes of production (i.e. the shift away from the major label paradigm towards one that allows more autonomy for the artist) work to level the playing field in a way that clears away discriminatory asymmetries between label and artist, and works toward a dynamic of equal opportunity propped up by a fetishization of "democratization" facilitated by communicative technologies. As it relates to CF, this dynamic is characterized by a rhetoric that speaks specifically to an ideology of artistic creation, but augmented to reflect an entrepreneurial slant. This is directly evidenced in a piece Amanda Palmer wrote for the *The Guardian* in 2014 that is entitled "Art is a business –

and, yes, artists have to make difficult, honest, business decisions." The headline itself is

illustrative of a neoliberal ethos that is clearly superimposed upon an artistic ethos. It both

aggravates and mobilizes a tension (i.e. between business and art) as a way to reaffirm the

motivation of financial capital in the arts as regrettable necessity. It is within this rhetorical

aggravation where this ideological function is revealed. Articulated this way, art indeed remains

the emphasis and the driving motive. In this manner neoliberalism is effective because it can

provide individuals with a way of absolving themselves of responsibility for how they enter into

and follow through with agreements through an appeal to "necessary conditions" (e.g. "Look,

this is the reality of how the business works. If I want to create art, I need to deal with these

limitations and constraints."), thus, any instances or accusations of wrong doing are muted in the

face of transparency, ambition, and agency. For CF, this is especially pertinent considering the

cultural commitments that are developed by drawing donations. Financial contributions work

well to recast cost as value, and consumption as devotion to larger causes or communities that

artists are then obliged to look after with great care. To be sure, this sale strategy and a curated

rhetoric is not unique to CF. But when it is mobilized within an exchange largely free of

consumer protection, it becomes potentially problematic. Jen Harvie (2013) captures this

dynamic well when she suggests that:

> Crowdfunding appears to normalize philanthropic giving as consuming in ways
>
> that might, simultaneously, limit the altruistic potential of giving, risk
>
> commoditizing the arts organization and/or the artist and make the arts
>
> organization beholden to prioritizing funder's expectations, requests or demands
>
> more extensively than it might otherwise wish. The distortion of the benevolent

social relationship that might exist between giver and receiver can run both ways

(pg. 173).

Thus, generally speaking, the CF exchange itself is understood in a context of risk, value, and cultural commitments. CF's exchanges enshrine the "Individual" in a strategic relationship to a "community" within which priorities and interests are re-cast as devotions and commitments that function to obscure possible ethical vulnerabilities.

Cost And Value: Opportunity In Crisis

If one were to look at a few CF campaigns, it would become quickly apparent that each one is organized according to the artist's or band's own evaluations. That is, there are only general similarities that can be recognized across various campaigns – one of which is the rhetoric used in CF campaigns that draw from cultural ideations, the other is the low-cost perks or rewards. Although, as the donation points increase, the associated perks/gifts offered begin to vary. For example, there is an artist raising money through the PledgeMusic platform is asking for $1500 in exchange for a day of writing and recording with said artist. The artist will own 100% of the Master and Publishing rights [3]. Another campaign asks for $50 in exchange for a digital download of the six-song EP (the one in need of fundraising to record) and a "follow on Instagram.[4] Another band, hoping to fund the recording of their album through Kickstarter, asks for $100 in return for a CD of the new album and a mention of their name in the liner notes.[5] An artist raising money through Indiegogo includes a donation point of $5,000 in return for a private

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[3] (http://www.pledgemusic.com/projects/leedewyze?referrer=popular
[4] https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-follow-your-dreams-ep#/
[5] https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/forlornstrangers/forlorn-strangers-debut-full-length-album?ref=category_featured

concert for which travel and "expenses" not included.[6] A band from Portland is asking for $500 in exchange for a producer's credit on the album (that is, the mentioning of that donor's name in the album's liner notes) and a house show, provided that donor lives in Portland.[7]

The monetary values suggested above raise numerous questions, the most obvious of which inquires into how these price points are justified? Importantly, those answers will vary based on who you ask. If you ask a fan, it is most likely more about the affective *value* of an experience, or being part of an experience. For the fan, the CF exchange is not prioritized economically, that is, as a moment of mere expenditure. Rather, it symbolizes a cause much greater than an object or commodity. In this case the fan might claim it is a meaningful expression of support and participatory engagement. Indeed, the rhetorical character of these campaigns plays directly to those sentiments in that they emphasizes the invaluable or experiential aspects of music fandom, which allows the artist to then assign value to certain perks according to affective qualities.

Although, from a critical standpoint, it is important to explore how these values are translated into cost and what fosters this transition in a way that allows for such variations. At the most essential point, we refer again to Attali and his claim that music has no value in and of itself (Attali, 1985, pg. 106). Framed in this way, the modes of production, commodification, and consumption become salient in our discussion because we are reminded that value and related cost are assigned by a set of relationships. Similar to other commodities, pricing of musical objects is regulated and set according production costs, consumer demand, market innovations and trends.

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[6] https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/damien-escobar-boundless-album-tour#/
[7] https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/sun-machine-s-debut-album--2#/

Up until the early 2000s, major music labels, distributors and retailers, generally controlled the price of music commodities. The work between these entities established and maintained standards of practice to guide how various components of these processes (both industrial and cultural) were to function. However, throughout the first ten years of the new millennium, "as the material conditions and cultural practices of the listener rapidly changed there arrived a chance for some innovative as well as nascent practices and services to emerge" (Anderson, 2014). These changes, in part, included lower production costs, easier and cheaper access to content, and a reduced reliance upon traditional third party intermediaries such as labels, distributors and retailers. As a result, these established institutions and their control over standards of practice were thoroughly disrupted, specifically the cost and value in relation to the desired and necessary funding and sale of musical objects. Eric Dougan (Warner Bros. Music vice president in 2009) remarks on this change and the affects of this change, namely, "finding, 'new ways for people to interact with entertainment content' while focusing on 'the relationship between artist and fan,'" which, in terms of economic exchange, led many to practice offering music for free (Anderson, 2014). Thus, here we see an intersection of cost and value that reflects Attali's claim on the absence of value in music itself.

As the emerging "web 2.0" digital culture continued to enable and facilitate new modes of production and distribution, it simultaneously brought about a re-conceptualization or re-location of values and cost. Dougan's mention of the need to nurture the relationship between artist and fan bears directly on band websites and social media platforms such as Twitter, Myspace, Facebook, Instagram, etc., where content is often offered for free in order to help build an active fan community that, ideally, will help fund the band or artist in other ways. Further, it is not uncommon for bands or artists to encourage the dissemination of their music freely to

others. From 2008 and 2015, there were a number of highly successful rock bands that released free digital music to fans. Regardless of the intentions that motivated these decisions, it is important to recognize that these bands (Radiohead, U2, Wilco, Nine Inch Nails) had accumulated years of promotion and distribution within the prior system. If we can speculate that the decision to release music for free is often made for promotional interests, then we can inquire into why such established artists would release digital music for free when there is no apparent need to do so? In these particular cases, the popularity of the artists represents a leverage that constitutes an asymmetrical dynamic that falls in favor of the artist.

These cases exemplify what Dougan claims is the need for artists to nurture the relationship between fan and artist and offer new ways of engagement, participation, and consumption. Interestingly, these instances of free offerings the reveal the precarity of cultural negotiations within fan communities. In U2's case, the band's front man Bono, was driven to apologize for not giving the fans, or iTunes users, the option to opt out. Where one fan requested after the release, "can you please never release an album on iTunes that automatically downloads to people's playlist ever again? It's really rude;" Bono replied, "I'm sorry about that. This beautiful idea, we kind of got carried away with it." (Rothman, 2014). Elsewhere, he went into more detail. Writing about *Songs of Innocence* on the U2 website, Bono writes: "Free, but paid for. Because if no-one's paying anything for it, we're not sure 'free' music is really that free. It usually comes at a cost to the art form and the artist…which has big implications, not for us as in U2, but for future musicians and their music…all the songs that have yet to be written by the talents of the future, who need to make a living to write them." In the case of U2, their free give away was executed in a partnership with Apple, which justifiably invites a scrutiny that emphasizes the market dimension in Baym's market relationships. Speaking to Trent Reznor (the

front man of Nine Inch Nails) in an interview from 2008 Jan Ramsey speaks in a way that emphasizes the relationship side of the market relationship. To Reznor: "Your solution seems to be to trust your fans, rather than treat them as a market ripe for exploiting, which has been the major labels' way. You've put your financial fate in your fans' hand'"" (Ramsey, 2008) Although, with an artist such as Reznor, is it a stretch to claim that he is putting his fate in his fans in such an extreme way? Later, the article states (using a rhetoric ripe with ethically and culturally evaluative terminology): "Reznor's committed and genuine expression in this creative distribution act has given independent artists hope that they can do it too, without the label." Adding his own reference to the implicative meaning of this free release, Reznor says, "thank you for your continued and loyal support over the years – this one's on me."

The aforementioned CF campaigns, the U2 experiment, Trent Reznor, etc.–- reflect the various contingencies that play into strategic negotiations of affect, cost, marketing, artist/fan relationship, and artist identity. Indeed, there are varying and simultaneous motivations behind these types of decisions that cannot, and should not, be reduced to one salient reason because even one motivation can yield various gains, losses, or both, which effect the differing aspects that figure into these market relationships. The flux which arises within this paradigmatic shift emboldens the negotiations briefly touched upon here, and disrupts and mobilizes (both positively and problematically) prior associations and relations between production, cost, and fan/artist interactions which then play out across these SM platforms and in media coverage.

Wrapped up within, and existing at the mercy of these cultural and industrial negotiations, is the musical content and object itself. While "the general world of music [has been] moving towards these out-of-the-box ideas for distributing music" (Muller), the cost to value ratios that inform establishing the cost of musical commodities (and any industrial frames

of reference that have up until this shift served to dictate that ratio) are dislodged. In the wake of this disruption, cultural meanings and the artistic process are appropriated as the commodity by CF in two ways – in place of the absent object, and as the true source of value inhering within the object.

Summary

This chapter put forth a critical theorization of CF. It argues that under the influence and effects of neoliberalism, artists are emancipated from (or ejected from) institutional constraints which then re-orients the the artist within a cultural and industrial environment uninformed by established standards of practice. These unestablished standards of practice inform a re-negotiation of values, costs, and cultural commitments that the artist must navigate in order to remain productive. CF campaigns are a space in which these re-negotiations play out, i.e. CF campaigns are singular instantiations that expose and reflect the tensions brought forth from the inter-relations de-institutionalization and cultural values and commitments within a neoliberal environment.

CHAPTER 3

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

This chapter is a discursive analysis of the survey and interviews that were conducted for this study. The interviews were analyzed in order to see if the tensions theorized in the previous chapter are reflected in the discussions with these musicians. To be sure, there were numerous reflection of those tensions. These moments are identified and explained in the following sections and, similar to the previous chapter, the results are organized into three areas of focus- expectations and experience, de-institutionalization, and compulsory entrepreneurialism, all of which are defined and explained below.

The theoretical framework for this study argues that CF is instantiation of neoliberalism. As discussed above, neoliberalism seeks to bring *all* human action into the domain of the market. As such, neoliberalism, both conceptually and in operation, maintains a presence, influences, and directly engages various positions associated with CF. In essence, CF can be understood as both an instantiation and installation of neoliberal ideologies. The following analysis of the interviews I made with musicians yields data that reflects the ubiquitous presence of neoliberalism in many aspects of their thought and behavior. It should be noted that these musicians never used the term, neoliberalism. Neoliberalism's presence influences the institutions against which musicians negotiate. Indeed, the pervasive character of neoliberalism means that its instantiations must occur through numerous on-the-ground installations and discussions. The goal of this analysis is to identify and define these moments and their accompanying themes that repeatedly appear in these interviews so that we may critically evaluate their function and meaning to see how the theory of CF I put forth in the previous chapter operates.

Before identifying and defining the salient themes that emerge in these interviews, it is helpful to emphasize the importance of two integral components that underscore the discussions. The first of which is the necessary function social media plays in all aspects of CF. Here, I define social media generally, as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Not only is CF not possible without access to social media devices and platforms, as well as at least some degree of familiarity with social media platforms and devices, the success or failure of CF campaigns can also depend upon the user's ability to effectively utilize social media. Despite the necessity of social media for CF, the attitudes, assumptions, and concerns of visibility and access facilitated through social media differ depending on the user. The second integral component that may be less salient to outside readers is that of musical genre. Each musical genre comes with a unique set of standard practices that inform how artists within those genres identify, perform, communicate, and market themselves and their music — all of which are played out over social media platforms. Distinctions in genre practices can be recognized in how artists utilize different SM platforms, as well as the degree to which they are used. Representations vary as can be seen by juxtaposing the Twitter accounts of hip hop artist Nicki Minaj whose account consists largely of self-promotion via images of herself or hyper-links to projects she's involved in, and singer of indie-rock band Vampire Weekend, Ezra Koenig whose account is currently focused on political issues and shows on-going discussions with other users. This reveals just one example of how SM platforms are often utilized differently in ways that illustrate and suggest distinct genre practices The more genres that are included in the comparison, the more distinctions become apparent. Those values that each genre prioritizes (e.g. hip hop's association with material wealth as a symbol of empowerment, approach to social awareness, and particular emphasis on authenticity or punk

rock's negotiations of authenticity and acceptable paths to success) can be seen in SM presence across all platforms, CF included. As such, genre commitments hold significant influence in the development and expressions of those attitudes, assumptions, and concerns of visibility and access relating to SM. Because CF is a social media platform that connects artist with fans (to be sure, these connections are furthered through the sharing of the CF campaign across various social media platforms such as Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, and Twitter) for the purpose of garnering financial contributions, and because genre informs how artists function as artists and a business, we can understand CF to be reliant upon both social media literacy and the specific genre rules that dictate one's social media presence. The interviews reflect this dynamic, i.e. the need for SM as well as tensions that revolve around how one utilizes it. Finally, these two components of SM competency and genre commitments constitute a space in and through which other themes of this analysis circulate. For example, in exploring the theme entitled "compulsory entrepreneurialism," we necessarily explore how genre tensions, and social media literacy and attitudes, influence and interact with that theme. This inter-relation also plays out when exploring the theme of "de-institutionalization." Thus, as we look specifically at the themes that emerge in this analysis, we will also be discussing the implications associated with social media and genre.

The three themes of CF that emerged in these interviews are as follows: 1) The tension between the expectations and experience of instantiating a CF campaign; 2) the compulsory entrepreneurialism involved in a CF campaign; and, 3) CF and accompanying de-institutionalization. Allow me to explain the three themes below:

First, I look at each participant's *expectations and experience.* CF is often framed rhetorically as an emancipatory mechanism that frees artists and entrepreneurs from the

constraint and uninspiring drudgery associated with previous standards of practice. Often the expectation surrounding a CF campaign is that it will provide the individual both creative and financial autonomy in developing an artistic product and this it the advantage of the model. However, the reality of this degree of autonomy offered through CF is met also with the reality of increased responsibility over the more laborious details required in bringing an idea into existence. As the interviews reveal, the increase in unanticipated labors alter the CF experience and often bring about a less enthused, even negative, view of CF. While the enthused rhetoric of CF often emphasizes artist agency, it fails to make mention of the responsibilities that come with that agency.

Second, I address *de-institutionalization.* For the artist, de-institutionalization creates a direct contact with the marketplace and market practices that were once mediated and negotiated by many third party intermediaries such as PR agents, promotional teams, marketing teams, etc. CF is a specific instance that requires the artist to make marketing and valuation decisions without the aid of the institutions and their resident experts that set these terms. Without their institutional guidance and access, the artist must engage directly with these issues, of which often he or she is often ignorant. These negotiations are associated, similar to compulsory entrepreneurialism, with SM literacy as well as their genre commitments because they both influence these negotiations. This theme is broken up into two sections: 1) Unrecognized Labor and 2) Direct Contact with Market Practice

Lastly, I address what I refer to as *compulsory entrepreneurialism.* Instances of this theme appear when an artist recognizes his or her decision to CF as the "only option," or an option (s)he feels constrained to take. In the most direct sense, compulsory entrepreneurialism emerges from a lack of access to the financial resources necessary to produce and bring a project

to the marketplace. It also reflects a lack of access to institutional support, as well as a growing recognition on the part of artists that past institutions such as labels and publishers lack the influence they once possessed. Thus, as much as a compulsory entrepreneurialism speaks to a lack of opportunity, it also reflects a shifting understanding of the value of those opportunities.

These three themes are inter-related and represent varying extensions of the influence of neoliberalism on the music industries and individual musicians. The CF platforms and process are uniquely vulnerable to this particular mode of capitalism as will be shown in accordance to the themes that emerged in the interviews.

There were seven interviews conducted. Of the seven, five of the participants were white males between the ages of 24 and 39. The two females were 30 and 34. Four of the seven participants fell within the indie-rock genre, one played folk, and the other two participants played pop, or "commercial" music. These genre distinctions are not clearly defined and sub-genres exist within each. For example, the folk artist I interviewed exists primarily in an indie-rock community, and one of the participants is pop artist only in the professional sense and identifies differently as a music fan. The group was racially homogenous. All participants were white. Three of the seven participants were professional musicians, the remaining four were semi-professional or amateur. For this study, "professional" means that music is their primary source of income. Semi-professional means that their main ambition is music, but supplemental income is needed to support that ambition. Amateur means that music treated more like a hobby. The participants were from different regions within the United States – the Midwest, southeast, and northeast.

Expectations and Experience

Interviews often exposed a distinction that exists in the expectations many held before they engaged in the CF process and what the CF experience entailed. In most cases the interviewees' expectations reflected a celebratory rhetoric that is widely associated with the CF process. Specifically, this rhetoric includes proclamations about the benefits associated with a more horizontal/peer-to-peer/mutually-involved collaboration between artist and donor. One interviewee, a 39 year old male indie rock musician named "Eric" who has not CF but is supportive of it says:

> For me, it really closes the gap between fan and artist to where it's like, "we want
> to do this, you know…come." The ones that I've seen done successfully will
> bring you on the journey with them. "We're going to do this record, you join in
> and we'll give you videos, come along with us." [sic] (Transcript 6)

Eric's support of CF lie in notions of participation and fan/artist intimacy, both of which are often cited as a salient appeal and advantage of the CF model. Similarly, the 24 year old folk musician who will be referred to as "Troy" responds:

> (CF) puts a stamp on that it isn't entirely yours and that's what makes it so
> beautiful is that you're giving people an opportunity to invest in you as an artist
> while simultaneously giving them the feeling of ownership to an extent.
> (Transcript 5)

Troy uses adjectives such as "beautiful" and frames the CF exchange as a way to give others an opportunity to invest which he believes translates to a feeling of a degree of ownership. Again, this parallels to claims often about CF that make it such an advantageous way to create an artistic product. Interestingly, Troy describes it as a *feeling* of ownership, not actual ownership, thereby

exposing the influence of affective emotions and their ability to disguise or neutralize questionable decisions on behalf of the artist. For example, handing over the completed product to a major record label that then injects the product into traditional revenue streams ultimately serving to reinforce the industrial dynamic CF emerged to help circumvent or challenge. This decision is "questionable" because it could be understood as a decision that ultimately undermines the goal of establishing stronger fan/artist communities in that the inclusion of a third party intermediary re-introduces a point of mediation between fan and artist.

Referencing another main appeal of CF, a 34 year old professional female pop artist, from here on out referred to as "Ellen," says that being able to work outside of the record label paradigm is a great thing:

> I think it's fantastic. I think that by-passing labels and allowing artists to have
> "investors" that believe in a product, to be able to have investors that you can pay
> back through perks is so much better than being taken advantage of by record
> labels? (Transcript 4)

However, the experiences of some cFers often reflects a sober account due to the unforeseen labors necessary to run a successful campaign. In this manner, the expectations function as part of an ideology in that it prioritizes and consecrates ideations over any potential drawbacks that can arise as a direct result of installing the CF mechanism.

As more than one interviewee attests, the running of a CF campaign necessitates an almost constant management of SM presence leading to both exhaustion and anxiety. Troy references the relational labor required in running a CF campaign:

> The communicating with everyone letting them know what's going on,
> constantly, in a way that actually keeps them involved and intrigued and not

bored with it…and at the same time displaying sincerity which is extremely

difficult through the internet. (Transcript 5)

Similarly,"Mike,"34 year old professional male songwriter and producer located in Nashville

who has successfully CR expresses:

…it takes a considerable amount of time to get your product finished and

shipped, and sometimes people move and you get return mail and you dig

through 700 email addresses…well, they are based over seas… it used to be it

would cost $3 to ship a CD, and now it's going to cost $20, but they only

donated $15. There are so many factors…uh, and if you're doing something by

yourself… (Transcript 2)

As illustrated, the labor required is not simply related to the demands of material

production that fall solely on the artist, but also a more specialized form of mental labor. This

additional labor can ultimately alter one's conception of CF to such a degree that the prior

paradigm is again desired despite its flaws, as "Mike" expresses:

I would not do it again. I would prefer to use my own resources, find my own

investment through a label or investor as opposed to congregating smaller

donations. (Transcript 2)

Mike reflects on his experience with CF negatively and would prefer to rely on record labels or a

private investor if he were to do a similar project again.

These excerpts make mention of the unforeseen labor that is either not predicted or

perhaps relegated to the larger goal of producing an art object. Thus, between expectation and

experience lies an ideation propped up by ideological mechanisms such as notions of mutual

fan/artist participation, community, and empowerment for both fan and artist. Here, Mike points

to the power of ideations and explains an earnest passion can obscure judgment and attention to details that can potentially lead to disillusionment:

> I would say that to promise somebody something that you do"t even know
>
> yourself if you're capable of doing…that happens so often with a CF campaign.
>
> A lot of times there's a passion to create, and that passion is so strong that you're
>
> willing to start that profile and make that video and put that call of action
>
> out…and that passion may be completely pure, but doesn't take into account
>
> consequences of asking people to give you money for you to create something.
>
> (Transcript 2)

These responses echo the professed appeals of an ideal CF experience discussed in chapter 1: democratic appeals, a meaningful mutual involvement between artist and contributor, the amplification of community, and the opportunity for artistic creation free from exploitation of financiers and third parties. Although, some of the responses express a less-enthusiastic account of CF. As Mike and Troy mention, organizing and running a campaign, either successful or unsuccessful, involves a substantial amount of labor that is not taken into account when establishing the campaign. Still, it is important to emphasize that even in cases where the CF campaign proved to be a more laborious or unsatisfying experience than one initially thought, it doesn't mean that the experience was entirely without the emancipatory expectations that represent the appeals of running a campaign. Rather, they help to construct a more accurate picture of what is actually involved in running a CF campaign, namely, the labor that is still required to actualize the object through the CF campaign. Thus, what these interviews suggest is that CF comes with its own inherent vulnerabilities and obstacles that are obscured by the ideational representations of CF we so often see.

De-institutionalization

As stated in the previous chapter, CF has emerged in a time of industrial transition largely characterized by a re-orientation of major record labels (e.g. large-scale acquisitions by corporations that see their IP assets appealing as long-term investments rather than their manufacturing capabilities in the wake of declining sales and a shift in modes of consumption, production, and dissemination). CF emerges from the wake of this transition and offers way to pursue a goal without relying on previous established practice. Where before ambition had to be matched with financial support that is usually secured through a record contract, family wealth, or an investor, now artists can utilize the communicative reach of Kickstarter or Indiegogo to help raise substantial amounts of money. In this way, CF is a leveraging mechanism against the influence of wealthy third party intermediaries. To be sure, artists are definitely aware of this shift. A 35-year-old professional male drummer, "Anthony," notes that, "These days, because you don't sell records like you used to, you have to use other channels" (Transcript 3).

Eric made note of how this transitional phase leads to new kinds of consumer interests that demand more than just a CD. He says, "Yeah, you can get records anywhere at any time…so that's not special. Someone puts out a record? Cool, I can get it for free wherever I want" (Transcript 6). Where this industrial and cultural shift provides new production and financing opportunities for artists, this same shift requires more specialized skill sets and applications that were once handled by those institutions to be placed upon the artist. Mike, whose successful campaign raised over $50,000 through Indiegogo expressed this responsibility at length. He recalls:

When you're making a record when you're signed to a label and you have push

back the recording, you don't have to go to your audience via twitter and say, 'so

sorry we're starting three days later. But when you ask people to contribute, you

feel more obligated to let people know what is going on…and it may be someone

who has just seen you perform once when you came through Omaha once. That

shift in the relationship to where you're now obligated to keep 700 people yo''ve

never met, or met once in a meet and greet, or someone whose floor you slept on

in 2003…but that obligation can get very confusing, tiring, frustrating. (Transcript

2)

He explains further:

There are so many factors (to take into account) if you're doing something by

yourself. In the past, a lot of these artist will say, "We've been on a label for years

and now we're independent and we're so proud of that, which is why were

coming to you." Well hold on, just understand that there are about thirty things

that you are totally unaware of that a label used to do for you, your manager, your

agent, your tour manager, the person in the mail room at the label that you never

met. This is now your responsibility and all those things add up. And you know,

it's impossible to measure your passion in an hourly wage but one way to do that

is to enter into a CF campaign and log your hours and expenses. And then you can

see if it was ultimately worth it or not. (Transcript 2)

Mike's response, on the one hand, reflects how "independence," i.e. autonomy, possess cultural

capital, and on the other, he emphasizes what that actually entails. He then attempts an estimated

quantification of what it might mean to go "independent" by using a CF platform. This excerpt

serves to illustrate a salient tension of the CF process that inspires this study – negotiations of

cost and value. That is, it questions the value of a cultural commitment by applying it to market logic–- does the cost outweigh the benefit. It's a risk assessment.

Speaking specifically to the SM obligations that must be met during the length of the campaign in order to increase visibility and secure potential contributors to both donate financially and help increase the reach of the campaign, Jennifer (a 30 year old female semi-professional indie rock musician) discussing her SM use says, "Yeah, def, a lot of strategy for both. Not that I always execute it the way I want to because I feel like it's a 24/7 kind of thing" (Transcript 1). For Jennifer who is semi-professional, the need to be engaged in SM promotions 24/7 will be predictably impossible if she has other obligations and scheduling demands to meet in order to sustain herself financially. Indeed, this would even be difficult for a professional musician whose focus is the creative output that constitutes the project being funded through CF. Promotional work and PR work were just some of the services that the record labels provided because it was in their best interest to generate as many sales as possible. When this obligation falls on the musician, the two obligations (creative output and promotional/PR tasks) fight for time and energy.

De-institutionalization is not merely the erosion of influence of those institutions that had for so long maintained standard practices of financing, production and distribution, but also the emergence of new attitudes and opportunities that infused artist with entrepreneurial appeal. CF gave the artist an opportunity to develop a product according to his or own her ideals and desires. Although, entrepreneurial opportunity separated from the influence of traditional third party intermediaries imposes upon the artist not only additional labors, but it necessitates a grasp of skill sets and planning in areas never before engaged. This is not to say it can't be done, rather, it again challenges the notion of CF as a means that allows the free circumvention of prior

constraints.

Direct Contact With Market Practices

While this theme is closely related to that of de-institutionalization, it deals more directly

with the subjective aspects of artist identity, i.e. the ethical and genre specific tensions that are

aggravated in the necessities that emerge within de-institutionalization. Additionally, discussed

in chapter one, artist engagements with marketplace and practices require negotiations of value,

pricing of the object being funded, and what "perks" offered to attract contributions. On this

point, the interviews revealed negotiations that involve both the rationalization and justification

of questionable "asks," as well as attempts to consecrate art objects as something uniquely

valuable thus further obscuring or redirecting scrutiny of decisions. When discussing questions

of the setting of costs for perks, or the funding goal itself, the responses suggested that the

ideations often emphasized to increase enthusiasm and contributions give way to an ethics

informed by the market so to speak. When asked about the high prices that are disproportionately

for the associated perk, the Eric responds:

> So, that's where…being a capitalist society, that's what we do. Like, I buy a
>
> bottle of water that costs .20 to manufacture, but I'm buying it for $2. What are
>
> people willing to pay? If the top tier is 3k and the perk is a phone call from
>
> me…that's a stupid ask, but if they are willing to pay?

He continues:

> At the end of the day it's a business transaction. The artist is asking for
>
> money. So where is the confusion when fans say 'how dare you ask for
>
> money.' It doesn't have anything to with art until the transaction is returned
>
> and the fan likes it or doesn't like it. (Transcript 6)

Eric's statements reflect a free market logic in which market strategy is justified at the point of sale. As he expresses, asking $3,000 for a phone call is ok if someone purchases it. This type of thinking approaches price assignment by first figuring out what consumer are willing to pay and then setting it accordingly. Indeed, in a capitalist economy (as he explicitly states), this is how it works. Although, we can challenge his statement that this exchange is, "at the end of the day" is "a business transaction." This reductive line of free market thinking directly counters the ideals that CF prioritizes (i.e. consumer empowerment, participation in the creative process, fan/artist community). In the CF exchange, maybe the first question should be, "what is a fair amount of money to ask for?" Asking the question in this way positions the consumer more subjectively, i.e. as a peer rather than a consumer. Further, Eric's claim that the exchange has nothing to do with art until the transaction is made reflects a disturbing position that totally dismisses the artistic process as holding any value for the fan or musician. Again, this thinking goes directly against the ideals prioritized by CF platforms.

Similarly, although attempting to make a different point, Jennifer embraces the logic of capitalism in hopes of seeing an art object deserve its worth:

> That's how capitalism works. In other capitalistic ventures, if they make
>
> more money than they set out, no one even cares and you have a party. It's
>
> debatable that art is more or less valuable to the world than a plug in. It's
>
> funny how artists "made too much" for their hard work. I feel like it gets
>
> judged unfairly. (Transcript 1)

Jennifer's claim reflects the influence of neoliberal/capitalist ideology in which value is contingent upon market demand. Instead of the larger goals to establish a community in which the values of art objects are contingent upon cultural commitment that exist outside, and

independent of mainstream consumer markets (i.e. a type of community established through a devotion to those ideals emphasized by CF platforms), she feels that art and art objects should be treated like other commodities. This line implies that "fair judgment" means some operative understanding of just compensation. It also reduces and reinforces the idea of art as pure commodity, undermining CF platforms' rhetoric that associates artistic production and the artistic object as part of an "opportunity to create the universe and culture you want to see" (Kickstarter).

These interviews included discussions about Amanda Palmer and her campaign because it allowed me an opportunity to see both what these artists felt about the situation in general and explore how they may have handled a similar situation if they themselves were in Palmer's position. The general sentiment expressed was that because the exchange was at least perceptively transparent, and because it was funded for an artist product, Palmer was undeserving of criticism discussed in chapter one and referenced in the interviews because on one hand, that's how "capitalism works," and on the other, deserving to be celebrated because how well she handled the campaign and its connection with the arts. I cite excerpts from three different transcripts that suggests little concern over maintaining those values prioritized by CF platforms. Seneca, a 24 year old male indie-rock musician, says:

> I think it is a buyer beware thing. You funded this, thank you. Stay with me even
> if I become a part of this machine. Because, guess what, this machine gives me a
> career. (Transcript 7)

Anthony says:

> I don't have any issue at all. I do''t know the deep details of this story, but if she
> got one million, everyone still got something. then I have no problem someone

making money like that. If people are super stoked to get this product and are

willing to go that route. (Transcript 3)

In all of the above excerpts, we see an operative rationalization that sanctifies art as an under appreciated cultural value and simultaneously positions art as a commodity commensurate with other "capitalistic ventures." These moves and justifications are informed by a neoliberal ideology that can appeal to those cultural values emphasized by the CF process, while at the same time leaving these cultural products vulnerable to a market logic that prioritizes only in commodity exchange. The space for this movement has the potential to undermine the substantial and sustained disruption that is part of the CF model. This is not to claim that CF can not be culturally productive, rather, the hope expressed in the celebratory rhetoric of CF will ultimately relegate itself to a market logic that reinforces the same incentives and motivations that challenge the hope of free artistic autonomy and fan/artist relationships free from market influence.

Compulsory Entrepreneurialism

Where de-institutionalization addresses how, as a result of changes occurring within the music industries, artists are now obligated to take on new responsibilities they had not had concern themselves with before, compulsory entrepreneurialism refers to how an artist is essentially forced to pursue their artistic goals and ambitions as an entrepreneur. Thus, it is a decision one feels forced to make based on a lack of conceivable options that necessitates an engagement within an effectively de-institutionalized environment. The result creates additional demands on the artist that he or she did not explicitly wish for or could even anticipate. This particular dynamic clarifies the problems that often make the link between entrepreneurism and agency seem so effortless. For example, when asked about why they decided to CF, answers

often suggested that there was no other way to go about their goals. Jennifer states, "I did"t see

any other options really. We do"t have rich parents" (Transcript 1). Troy said that financial need

was the main reason motiving his decision to CF, followed by proof of concept: "1. Finances. 2.

I needed affirmation that it was even worth doing in the first place" (Transcript 5).

These two responses both mention explicit financial reasons for deciding to CF, although,

it is worth questioning why this would make one feel as though there were no other options.

Indeed, the 2nd response mentions what can be understood as seeking proof of concept, which

invites questions as to how artist's qualify their own ideas or processes. Would this person have

not gone through with it at all had he or she not ran a successful campaign? Mike's response is

illustrative of this problem:

> It was extremely reactionary. For me, —— had been on hiatus for over a year. I
>
> had moved twice in just over a year's time, so I was trying to figure out what the
>
> next part of my career was going to look like. I was passionate about this idea, but
>
> in order for it to be realized it was going to take a significant amount of money.
>
> (Transcript 2)

This response doesn't mention financial need as a primary motivator. Although, in using the term

"extremely reactionary," it suggests a decision made based on peripheral stimulus other than CF

itself. The second half of the excerpt then mentions financial constraints. So we can safely

understand this response to express a decision based on uncertainty and lack.

In taking into consideration neoliberal project, the process of de-institutionalization, and

the rhetoric employed to characterize the advantages of CF, it becomes worthwhile to ask why

these artists talk about their decision to CF as one made out of necessity. In as much as

neoliberalism is informed, in party, by a prioritization of individual freedoms, and de-

institutionalization creates new opportunities for the artist to enter take advantage of directly, and

CF is a mechanism that takes advantage these developments, why is it that CF is often framed by

a kind of desperate plea? Troy attributed his campaign's success to how he framed his goals in a

manner that was less-dramatic than he often sees: "Um…I wasn't too in everybody's face, the

posts were subtle, never dramatic. It was never, "if we don't do this it's over""(Transcript 5).

This statement is a comment on what he did as much as it is one that reflects how often dramatic

terms of desperation are employed to garner contributions. The recognition of a particular

rhetoric employed in these CF campaigns and those comments that singled out from the

interviews should not be taken to suggest an accurate representation of the motivating factors

that leads on to CF. Rather, it should be understood as a reflection of how the operative

environment informed by de-institutionalization and CF provide both agency, autonomy, and

opportunity that obligate artists (well intentioned or not) to negotiate tensions directly. The

negotiations of these tensions are reflected in these interviews. In the same way that Troy framed

the CF exchange as one that provides the fan with an "opportunity" to contribute financially to a

campaign (which is rhetorically framed in a way that equates financial contributions with the

notion of participation), the decision for an artist to organize a CF campaign is never positioned

as one that represents the only possible, or rationally feasible, option. This positioning functions

as a point of mediation. As long as any particular decision is perceived as one that is ultimately

un-coerced, difficulties that arise as a result of that decision can be interpreted by others as

occupational hazards. This logic reflects neoliberalism's embracing of "employee flexibility"

mentioned in chapter 2. In as much as CF is largely understood and presented as mode of

production and exchange that is more convenient and fair for both artist and fan, the risks that

inhere within the exchange are bracketed off and not offered any sympathy from spectators, because after all, one doesn't have to CF.

The environmental reality in which artists and fans currently exist, and the industrial and cultural shifts occurring within, does not lend itself to a general assessment as it relates to necessity and possibility, or having only one option vs choosing between numerous options. Where one musician might truly be reduced to the CF option because he or she has no other way to pursue goals, another more established musician might decided to CF despite having other ways to record their new record. Regardless of these various circumstances for artists and fans that are informed by differing degrees of constraint and opportunity, the arts in general, and CF in particular, are understood as luxuries. This works to protect the CF campaigns from scrutiny or sustained criticisms that address the CF model, and re-directs scrutiny towards the artists. Indeed, the artist should be held to that which he or she promises, and his or her words should be taken to mean something. That is, the artist should not be excused through an understanding that recognizes industrial constraints, although, attention should also be given to the environment that provide opportunity, or necessitate certain ways of doing things.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to critically examine how musicians conceive of CF and how they understand their own role as artists within the operative contexts out of which CF emerges, and through which it is informed and functions. Placed within the theoretical framework of neoliberalism and the environmental context of an industrial transition informed by disruption and de-stabilization, I put forth a critical theory of that explores CF as a space in which long established standards of practice are contested, negotiated, or re-oriented. I theorize that these contestations, negotiations and re-orientations, in as much as they emerge within and are facilitated through cultural shifts and industrial crises, are of particular import in influencing the establishment of a new paradigm. CF represents an instantiation of the neoliberal mode of capitalism that nurtures an environment in which the musicians themselves in the service of raising capital to fund the production and dissemination of musical products appropriate cultural forms. What occurs as a result is that the artist must confront his or her own cultural commitments in the negotiations of market practice within a shifting market place. These negotiations expose tensions which, in the previous paradigm, were mediated, nurtured, and curated by third party intermediaries.

The interview portion of this research was approached with the intent to see if there were any direct or indirect manifestations of the theorized tensions that occurred in discussions about CF. The goal was not to arrive at any clear conclusion that corroborates or challenges my theory. To be sure, the theory set forth is not framed as a binary that would allow that type of evaluation or broad proclamations. Because this analysis occurs in the midst of a transition, my hope is that the interviews will reveal both support and challenges to the theory put forth. In as much as it is

virtually impossible given the contingencies at play, there is little productive value in claiming CF as wrong or right, ethical or unethical, etc., rather, instances of conscious negotiations within this relatively new virtual space are evidence of an evolving process that seeks to establish new standards of practice that reflect the dynamic of the current environment.

When the interview analyses are set against the theory put forth in chapter one, the former does reflect in some ways the latter. In the very general sense, there is an evidenced presence within the conscious negotiations of the artists interviewed of the main points that inform my theory, i.e. neoliberalism, cultural and ethical blueprints, and cost and value. The negotiations are exactly that–- positions that are vulnerable, and that shift or oscillate following rationalizations that reflect the direct unmediated engagement artists experience in constructing their own CF campaign and negotiating the success of that campaign. What these interviews suggest is that as much as the cultural values that inform art communities still maintain ideal form, strong influence, and serve as guides, the lived experience necessitates a pragmatism that isn't eager to dismiss values altogether in the service of making strides forward, but does rationalize decisions by compartmentalizing cultural values and "business" in such a way that maintains the fidelity of both. As one interviewee noted, passion is still the driving force behind the decision to CF, but the conditions can lead to a myopic earnestness. Indeed, this doesn't signal a new vulnerability to cultural commitments within music genres or communities as these things have long been appropriated for marketing purposes.

As mentioned prior, the limitations of this research lie largely in the fact that my sample size was relatively homogenous and small. White indie rockers in the United States represent only a fraction of music cultures and communities in the US and around the world. The negotiations associated with CF and artist entrepreneurialism will surely vary depending on

genre commitments, age, region, etc. Although, the value of this research is that it initiates a conversation that speaks directly to the current environment within neoliberal culture and offers a method of investigation that can be reproduced and expanded upon. Further, the indie-rock genre is particularly sensitive to cultural commitments and genre rules of which I have long been intimately involved in both a professional and amateur context. As such, it is a good place to start. As musicians are increasingly obligated, and given the opportunity, to rely on his or her own ambition and expend personal resources (or hire others to assist), it serves to both promise more leverage in the wake of de-institutionalization and/or become infiltrated by corporate interests. This study doesn't attempt to prioritize one over the other, but rather, emphasizes CF as a space that rhetorically emphasizes the cultural value of the former while remaining vulnerable to the latter. The dynamic is best summed up in Eric's claim, "There are no rules, and that is both a good and a bad thing."

Although, in this ambiguity lies a more consequential vulnerability that threatens the ideational appeal and the transformative potential of the CF model. That is, because CF emerges in a moment of industrial crisis, it has the potential to influence the direction of development towards a new paradigm – one that is reflective of those values CF claims to prioritize (i.e. community, value as opposed to cost, mutual and meaningful participation, creative agency, consumer empowerment, artist autonomy). Simultaneously, the economic potential inherent in the CF model can undermine the very values towards which it aspires. The lack of a regulatory framework in place to reduce consumer risk, combined with labor required of the artist in running a campaign, as well as the amount of money raising functioning as a proof of concept makes the CF mechanism very appealing to larger corporate entities still looking to develop a strategy that can take full advantage of this environment, effectively appropriating CF as cheap

research and development, or a field for harvest. Additionally, the unchecked autonomy afforded the campaigning artist, and framed within an operative ideology of the autonomous artist that functions to obscures and mediates questionable practice behind the veil "cultural capitalism" (Zizek, 1999). It raises the question of how truly participatory and symbiotic these campaigns are, and invites critical scrutiny that explores notions of fan exploitation. Thus, while CF does indeed possess transformative potential to empower fans and artists in a new way, there's also potential for CF to to be used in a way that reinforces corporate leverage and further disempower consumers, thereby undermining community, democracy, and meaningful participation that goes beyond financial expenditure.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 1

This interview was with a 30-year old female song writer and recording engineer. It took place on January 14th, 2016 and was conducted over the phone. She is a semi-professional musician in the indie-rock genre. She is referred to as "Jennifer" in this study. Throughout this interview, I refer to myself as "Z," and I refer to Jennifer as "J." (These signifiers apply for each respective interviewee through Appendices A-G)

Z: How old are you?

J: I am 30?

Z: What is your professional involvement in music? What has it been? How much of your time is devoted to it?

J: I really started playing music when I was a little kid…around 6 or 7. I started with piano. I played in band in middle school, and some in high school. I was in chorus in 4th h and 5th h grade. In high school I started playing rock music…a post punk band. You know, we liked Weezer, Bright eyes, and Joy Division…things that were a little bit under the surface. Especially when you were 15 or 16, it was cool to kind of find out about all these things at once, I played bass in that band. Pretty much at the same time, I started experiencing with recording techniques. We wanted to make documents of what we were doing and we didn't have any money and we had to figure out how to do it yourself. And then we went to digital recording when I was 17, my senior year in high school was when it first became available to a normal person. It would take forever, but you could have cakewalk on your computer. Then I left New Jersey to Virginia and started playing in a band called ———— for a couple years, and I think during that same time I was recording my own stuff at home and discovered fruity loops. I took a few music classes at Old Dominion

University. I was an English major, because I just didn't think it was practical. I didn't think my parents would help me. Especially because I didn't do it academically in high school…why be a music major when you weren't even in orchestra in high school? I didn't really know there was a production program at ODU (Old Dominion University). So after ——— I started ———- and I got into recording again. Then I decided I wanted to do it as a career. I did an internship in 2010 at media center in Virginia Beach and learned about recording. And then I opened up my own recording business, and that has been my job since 2011. ———- has been around for five years now and I'm the vocalist, and program our backing tracks and sometimes I write all the songs. Our latest EP I wrote all the songs, and we were commissioned for an adaptation of Taming of the Shrew with the Virginia Stage Company, but they are also our songs so we still play them as ——-. ——— started last year which is another band where we all co-write and I play bass again. In 2012 I started working at ----- too. So I have my own little project studio which is (inaudible) on a restrictive budget, cutting corners and stuff. ------ is a little bit bigger and higher quality studio where you can dig in a little more with drum sounds.

Z: Do you consider yourself a professional musician?

J: No, I don't think so, because the income I make from music is like 5% of what I make.

Z: In terms of your interaction and band management, and communication with others…how much do you pay attention to your social media presence? Is there a lot of mindful effort/strategy that goes into it?

J: Yeah, definitely, a lot of strategy for both. Not that I always execute it the way I want to because I feel like it's a 24/7 kind of thing.

Z: You'd say it's an important part of being in your band because of visibility and what not?

J: Yeah.

Z: You've only crowdfunded ——- correct?

J: Yes

Z: Why did you decide to do that?

J: We wanted to make a record and even though I'm an engineer and I could do it for free, which is still kind of tough because you're putting your time in and it's like…you're almost doing this whole huge project. "I love being here till like midnight just like bouncing files when I do this every single day. This is awesome, give me another swig of wine." I wanted somebody else to mix it because I get lost working on my own stuff even though I mostly end up doing that. I don't really enjoy it. I do enjoy working on other people's stuff to an extent because I get paid. But when I work on my own stuff it's still all the tedium and none of the perspective. We wanted someone else to mix it who we really respected. So we wanted to do that, and he was very expensive even though he was giving us a great deal. It was still going to be several thousand dollars and that is something most people don't think about, that's really not that much when it comes to mixing a record. It costs quite a lot of money to get the thing done, and then pressing the thing would be $2,000 or $2,500. We still don't have a van and that would be another $2,500, and then if we were going to put all this time and money into a record we had to market it in someway, and another campaign with a publicist would be $1,400 or something like that…and we were already in the hole. (inaudible) For us to save up the amount of money without putting in our own money (on top of our instruments and time) it would've taken us like years to save it all at least, and would you even still be a band after all those years? I didn't see any other options really. We don't have rich parents. My other band was lucky enough to have an investor who wanted to help us press a record. One guy who was like, "I really like your music and I want to give you this and I don't really want anything in return except of like a piece of

your business." And that was really awesome, but I don't really know where those people are, and I don't know if there's a whole lot of them, or maybe there isn't a whole of them in ———, and maybe I don't hang out with people who like to invest in things or whatever, but I didn't see any other options. If we want to do the album we have to crowdsource, and if we don't then we don't make an album…or we could make one and release it digitally, but we didn't want to do that.

Z: What I'm hearing is, and you can correct me, you didn't really want to crowd fund or eagerly take advantage of some tool the internet provided. It's more just taking into consideration your economic situation and the pace of your lives individually. You have a goal, a modest goal, to put a record out. Was there a reluctance or an indifference in moving towards CF?

J: Man, yeah, no, when we talked about doing it, I mean, there's a reason why I never did it with ———- because I think you only have one chance. I could totally be wrong, maybe if you're a more famous artist and your find success in other ways you could make crowdsource for more than one album, but I think you only have one shot within your own community where you live. So if you were an artist for 5 or 10 years and you already have a national/international following then maybe you could CF again and all those people could pitch in. But starting from nothing with a friend/family type deal and some of your fans…you only have one. When we talked about doing it ———- was super optimistic because he had done it successfully before. I had raised $4,000, I did this thing called ———which was a cross country bike trip and you raised money for affordable housing. I personally did that and I remember it being really fucking hard. I was like "that was $4,000 and that was just me and I didn't have this platform that was ———- which, we had 800 fans and had people who came out to shows. I think we can do this. ——— was like "it'll be great, we'll start a CF campaign and people will give us money it's going to be great."

From his perspective…people keep asking us where the album is, so of course they will preorder it which is something you would think. But yeah, when we thought about starting, it was "let's all do this" and I think a couple weeks in was when I think all of our optimism went away.

Z: What was your strategy going into it? You guys did a video from —-, so did you have a strategy? Were you monitoring it? What was it like after you launched it?

J: Our strategy was; we did the video, and we shot live videos at —— and we had planned when we were going to kick it off, we were going to have a show and all this stuff. I don't know, a lot of personal problems happened. We had to cancel a show and that was a bummer, and then one of my bandmates left for California. and then another band mate launched it while he was gone kind of like without consulting any of us. All of a sudden it was up and it wasn't really ready. When I put things up I fucking put things up. Everything is perfect and I thought about what paragraph two means for 8 hours. I'm very OCD. ——— just posted our band bio and he didn't really set it up (inaudible). We also shot four videos that we were going to put up during the campaign, but he did it for free. I felt that we did have a strategy but the execution had little slides here and there, and I don't even know if those things being on point would've saved things. This is our best effort. It was kind of like, once it was launched we had a really great first day. I'd try to push the new videos and I was the only one saying things and maybe got a little bitchy towards my bandmates. It was like "just relax, it comes in waves. This show we're going have is a going to be a big night and that's where the money is going to come in." But where are we having this show? It wasn't even planned. I feel like the show went up on the internet a few days before it was supposed to happen. I felt like there was too much optimism form my other bandmates that it was going to all be ok. And then at the end of the campaign it was like "can we please post once a day" and they were like "I don't want to spam up in the internet." and some

were like "I didn't even know you were doing anything."

Z: I want to talk about the campaign itself. Do you remember the top amount you asked for?

J: I think it was $500.

Z: When you made the decision to the $500 donation point, what was the process of for determining what would be asked for and what would be included?

J: The lower amounts were normal dollar amounts for what you would pay for a record or a limited edition record that was numbered or whatever, (it) had a poster with it, plus shipping. A normal amount and maybe like $5 higher. So it was $25 for just a numbered record, and $50 for a numbered record and a t shirt. And then the higher amounts–- I think it was like $150 and you could get a DVD, limited edition...just stuff that would probably never be released again that was made especially for KS. I think it was $25, $50, $100, and $500. I think, and there was a $5 one if you wanted digital downloads, and a $10 for 10 songs digitally downloaded. The higher ones…the $100 was everything, the $500 was everything plus your name printed on the record. That was for someone who would think "yeah, I have a lot of money to support for art and I think it would be cool to have a record," instead of like, "hey, I donated a brick to this park, or a name on a chair at -----," or something, "I'd get my name on the back of this record. I have income and I want to support art," that was the higher one. And there was a Skype set too that you'd get. So we'd just set it based on what we thought the value of the thing was.

Z: Did anyone donate more than the top amount?

J: No, I don't think so. I don't think anyone donated the top amount.

Z: How did you feel after the campaign? What happened after? You did open funding so you got the money regardless of whether or not your met your goal. How do you feel about the experience? Would you do it again? What would you do it differently?

J: After the campaign, which ended Dec 6th, about a month and a half ago. We made about a quarter of our goal and we haven't done anything yet because we haven't decided what the most important thing is yet. I mean, we could press it and not market it, or we could press it but we can't tour with it. So we're going to finish it ourselves. We have that option. We can't get it mixed, so were definitely not doing that. But as far as the rest of it, it'll go toward the thing, but it wont be as big as we wanted. We have things to deliver. We have the t-shirts already, have the posters, we have the content for the DVDs. We promised records, so even if we only have a 100, then we'll press 100. We still have to deliver, even if only 10 people ordered a certain thing. We haven't done anything yet because we need to re-strategize. If we did it again, I would maybe do it again. I feel like you can't really do it with the same band unless it's really successful and you gain more fans, but I don't think you can do it with the same fan base twice. I think people will get tired of it. The experience? I don't know I mean, on the one hand, over all the things I remember most is that there was one person that almost shamed us for doing it and that sticks with me for some reason, because you're questioning us as musicians. That will always stick with me negatively. For other people it was a positive experience, "Oh my god, I can't believe you donated that much, that's amazing." "You guys deserve it, I wish I could've given more." Hearing stuff like that is really a positive experience even though we didn't reach the goal. The people who did donate, and you know said things like that…you know, I know where they work and they probably don't make much money and they gave us $50. That's cool. People like that…you wouldn't know they felt that way otherwise. You see people at shows a lot, and some people have the personal to say, "Hey, I think what you're doing is really awesome," but for some people it was a way of them showing you that they believed in you. So I thought that was really positive. Also, seeing people kind of like defend the whole idea when it was being

questioned was a positive experience too. It was stressful, and a bummer that it didn't reach its goal, but also, yeah, getting these specific shows of support from specific people was positive.

Z: Do you think it alters or changes your sense of obligation to fans, maybe changes the way you communicate? How you interact with fans and the dynamic between fans and artist?

J: I think, it does put an obligation on you to follow through on the thing that you promised, especially those who donated a lot. It's like, they deserve to see the thing finished. I don't know, I feel like it's almost a contract. I know there's no contractual obligation to deliver on what you say you're going to deliver on, but I feel like it is because that's what you said and in writing on the internet. But like you know it's clear that's what they were donating for. I feel like the people who did stand behind it, I feel like...a tighter, I don't know, more part of the thing as a whole.

Z: You've heard about the Amanda Palmer campaign?

J: Yeah, she's a case study for success right?

Z: Yes, she's a case study. She ended up getting $1 million and she was criticized by a lot of people in terms of how she handled that success. My question to you is what do you think about that situation? She got more money than she asked for…is that a situation that you would want? There's no contractual obligation to fans, so when you have this much surplus on a campaign that you spelled out what you were going to do. If you're not held accountable, what do you with the money? What would you do?

J: Yes, I'd be ok with it being super successful and having extra money because a lot of artists never actually get compensated. I mean…what's fair and what's unfair? But like, just enough to be like "Hey this kind of runs itself and I can live my life," We weren't trying to get a fancy van, but a shitty van. We were just trying to do it. I feel like…in a musician's case, it's like yeah…we were only going to do 500, but 2000 people wanted it…good, make 2000 records. Hopefully

that's what would happen…that you would sell that many because you made it. But if that many people pre-order it? You know what I mean? Good! More people wanted the record than I ever thought. Here it is. I made more money because that's how capitalism works. In other capitalistic ventures, if they make more money than they set out (to make), no one even cares, and you have a party …and no one even voted on that. It's debatable that art is more or less valuable to the world than a plug in. It's funny how artist…how…they "made too much" for their hard work. I feel like it gets judged unfairly. I don't know. She's probably the most notorious.

Z: The questionable aspect is that the money you asked for is designated. I asked for that much keeping in mind what I wanted to do. With the money on top of what was requested, do you see it as "free money?" Or do you have a responsibility to create more product? In one sense, people knew what the situation was. On the other hand, I asked for this much money that I could"t do it without it. This was particularly for a specific project. So with the surplus money on top of what was asked, the question becomes–- is it understood as money for a artistic project, or something else and people gave me money knowing this was going to be the case.

J: I think it depends on if people specifically took advantage of a particular perk. If that is what they clicked on, that's what they should get. If they just threw money at it, or more than $50 on a $50 perk, then all they should get is the $50 thing. I think legally yeah, I don't think she would have any responsibility to do more than what she set out to do. As an artist, it would be better to expand your project. Ok, we're not making 500, we're making 2000. What's the fucking big deal…press more, or *hire more* people to fill more boxes, but legally she doesn't really have to.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 2

This interview was with a 34-year old white male singer/songwriter and producer and will be referred to as Mike in this study. He considers himself a professional musician in the indie rock genre. This interview took place on January 26th, 2016 and was conducted over the phone.

Z: Tell me how old you are.

M: I'm 33, I'll be 34 next month.

Z: How long have you been doing music? Do you consider yourself a professional musician?

M: When I was 19 I had one and a half years of college under my belt, but I dropped out and moved to LA and started playing as a auxiliary musician for an artist named -----. Before I turned 20, I was 19 and was living out there in west Hollywood. He was an artist on Flawless Records, a subsidiary of Interscope Records, and then eventually transitioned over to Columbia Records. At 19, I was bass, keys, a little guitar. When I was done with that, I started ----- at the age of 20, our first record out. We recorded that in Virginia Beach, where I was born in raised. By the time I was 19 I was playing music professionally, and since, just continued down that path. I have a studio out in ------ that I work out of.

Z: So you do consider yourself a professional musician?

M: Yeah, for sure.

Z: So your daily job, or any semblance of one, is recording and producing music?

M: Yeah, I've got a production room at a studio. It's a full band production studios called ------. I've got a production room upstairs which I pay rent for, I think $500 a month. It gives me 24 access to the gear that I own, and I have access downstairs for free after the hours whoever is booking time. Any days it's not booked, I'm free to work down there. I've been there for two years next month. I've been in Nashville since 2011. So for five years I've been renting out

studio space. Before that, I'd do recording where ever the labels would take us. Most of the time at ----------- has had a studio since I was in high school when I was like 17 and would record my band' stuff out there as well.

Z: So you were 19 when you went to Los Angeles, that's 15 years now. Over the years, and even now, how has the role of social media (SM) platforms played into what you do? Has it become something that's necessary? SM roles have changed over the years…and especially in the last 10-12 years. How much attention do you pay to SM? Is is something you curate pretty persistently?

M: Yeah, I rely very heavily on SM to stay connected to other professionals in my industry, to follow bands and artists that I've worked with before, that I hope to work with for the first time or again. I am currently putting together a new website (in audible) my production skills and benefits to working with me in the studio. I'm using a Tumblr page. I remember when —- were touring in 2005 and we took ——- with us, that was the first time I had met a band that didn't have a www.com website, only a Myspace account. I thought that I was shocking to me that a band would forego having their own website and just use the other, or I guess just use a mass SM engine like Myspace to house or whatever their brand and their news. And then now, whenever I want to do research about artists, bands, producers, I kind of just go to Facebook. I use that search engine to find out what I need. Anything from touring, to news, to updates in the studio, recording process or anything like that. I'm also not nearly as engaged as I know I could be. So sometimes, even though, as important as it is, and I've used it as much as I do, there are levels of participation in SM, and I would consider myself somewhere in the middle. I could use it more often to engage the audience I have, and I could use more often to learn what I'm unaware of about colleagues, and artists, and music industry updates. So I'm somewhere in the middle where

I would gauge like, my use being compared to someone as active as they could be, to someone who doesn't use it enough. But yeah, over the years it's changed so much. I remember when our manager told us to get a Twitter account and start tweeting and I just thought that was peculiar. I never thought someone would want to stay connected to me or us in such a SM capacity using twitter, that was back in 2006 or 2007. So obviously things have changed in the last decade there as well.

Z: So, why do you think you don't engage in it as much as you should or would. Is there a conscious reason as to why you do not?

M: I just think it's so crowded. It's as much as a resource as it is a distraction and things that I might be interested in sometimes, but not often enough, come through the same feed, of course that would be my choosing based on who I follow, but at the same time it's not my choosing when it comes to being tagged in something I'm unfamiliar with. It can become overwhelming to the point where even hopping on FB to research something and an hour goes by and you end up learning about some guy you knew in [3r]d grade about his vacations to Florida. So much information that you can find what your looking for every time, but you can find a bunch of stuff that you never intended to see or know about and sometimes its helpful, but in my case, ninety something percent of the time it's not. I tend to air on the side of less distraction over engaging more via SM.

Z: Do you talk to fans sometimes when you do go on? Or is it more research or networking based use?

M: I pick and choose. Being completely independent as an income earner, sometimes I go scouring SM to look for opportunities that otherwise I might not have had the opportunity to even know about for work. Several bands over the years have contacted me over FB asking me

about studio rates, gear, the studio itself, etc. A lot of times it can be helpful. As far as engaging

fans, I have played a few weddings. A fan ends up getting married and our band has been

important in their relationship. I'm going to Mexico in April to perform at a wedding that a

couple first hired me to record and write a song for him. You know, you can engage the fan base

and it can be advantageous for income opportunities. Sometimes I gauge their response to art,

tours, ticket sales. Engaging during our tour in May and in June, I spent more time on IG in those

few months than I have since I've been on IG. But I sort of distance myself the more time I

spend on SM from our fan base because that wall, it becomes pretty confusing. The line blurs

between artist and audience as far as, I guess, the establishment of relationships. I'm 33, I'm

married I live in Nashville. Being in a band and all that sort of like has this arrested development.

When I get older and I have a more normal life working, having a family and all that, I tend to

disengage from SM the older I get because it can become overwhelming or intrusive and

whatever boundaries one might feel necessary to set, SM can pull all those boundaries away. I

tend to stay away from all that, at the same time, that's just me, my personal experience. It just

depends. It can really be beneficial, I've seen someone tag me and someone say "getting married

next year and I'm going to walk down the aisle to ———- by ———." I'll respond and tell

them I play weddings, I've enjoyed and will do it again" It's really picking and choosing and

trying to maintain uh, a distance with the audience just because you'll never get to know these

people well beyond the SM experience.

Z: What did you CF?

M: I CF two endeavors at once. One is the idea of this community that I still feel very passionate

about, a community for musicians, artists, and creatives that need education or guidance on how

to sort of make it in a professional artistic world. In my case, being young and in a band, as many

artists are, you get the opportunities to record music, write songs, go on tours, be branded and marketed well or not well or adequately. It depends. You end up signing these contracts and working with these other entities and end up paying commissions out on gross or net if you're luckier. All these things happen to you while you are in awe that you are living out a dream of playing music for a living. These windows are pretty small and for one, the percentage of song writers that write and perform and record for a living, an incredibly small percentage know how to do that. On top of that, the life span of a career is so short. You can earn all the income in 3-10 years. 10 years is more unlikely. So when we were at our climax in our career, there was one year where we grossed 1.2 million dollars through touring, sales, royalties, sponsorships combined. I found myself a few years later wondering where my income went. So you start think about what you're paying out to managers, booking agents, labels, lawyers, and then there's not so much to be distributed to those that wrote the music, who 365 days a year, you know, a lot of handwork went into it and a lot of income that you don't see. All of those expenses add up and for an artists trying to turn a flash in the pan to a sustainable career. I want to develop an online community and a real community of artists, managers, label staff, etc., so that they can make informed decisions without being wide eyed and sign contracts just when they show up. I wanted to educate artists. And since I had a past with ------, and I was also looking to use this money to really, I was just using this CF campaign as an opportunity to anyone who was a ----- fan or interested in what I was doing solo, I was using it as a carrot to dangle, to get them to be interested and CF what I was hoping to turn this community into. This whole thing is called——— —..I CF back in 2012 over Thanksgiving and December where I did a 45 day campaign, our goal was fixed funding. We had to reach our goal of $50,000. We got a little over $51,000 in those 45 days. It was a successful campaign as it relates to reaching our goal, and I'm still on the fence as

to whether it was worth the stress, if it was personally worth it.

Z: Why did you decide to CF? Was it something you were eager about?

M: IT was extremely reactionary. For me, —— had been on hiatus for over a year. I had moved twice in just over a year's time, so I was trying to figure out what the next part of my career was going to look like. I was passionate about this idea, but in order for it to be realized it was going to take a significant amount of money to develop an online platform to cater to the mission statement and to the people and to the ideals that ——- was, the mission statement, the vision. So I met with a bunch of web designers and started to get quotes on what design and tech work was involved and the cost. Everyone around me, in my circle of friends and bands, bands I toured with, artists, producers, etc., they were going over to CF, there were a lot of Kickstarter campaigns I saw. Many were extremely successful, some were unsuccessful. I felt I had a chance. I hadn't really spent any time talking to any friends or peers or colleagues that had CF about war stories. I was a little blind about the details of CF. It was honestly more reactionary to where I was personally in my career, looking like a new lily pad to jump to than it was something I was eager about. I went back and forth in my mind for six months over whether or not was a good idea or not CF kept coming more and more popular and it made more sense to dip my toe in that water. Raising $50,000 for some might not be a big deal, but for me it was huge. Huge in the sense that it was over whelming to have to go through all the steps involved to make sure it was marketed well, to get a PR firm to raise awareness, kind of in the middle…or right at the very beginning, it became less about the vision and more about making sure we didn't fail. I spent about 45 days not getting any sleep at night doing other things to make sure uh, we were close to our goal, but not close enough that there would be funding elsewhere. I used Stageit.com to raise money for the CF campaign. I sold stuff on eBay and did whatever I

could do to make sure that this thing would get funded. It was really frustrating and it was unfortunate that, for some, you lose sight of what the goal is if you only start to obsess on reaching the goal. I've heard a lot of stories about that from others that have done CF campaigns. I hit my goal within 6 hours of the campaign ending. Within the last 48-72 hours, we went from $37,000 to $51,000. That was as stressful as anything I've done in my career.

Z: Going back to the SM, the CF campaign, during the campaign, you mention getting four hours of sleep a night to get as many donations as you could. So in that time frame, your SM engagement changed to help gain traction on the campaign itself.

M: Yeah, for sure. I was on Facebook and Instagram every hour trying to post something new. Trying to convince myself that people who had access to my stream, that there were still people who didn't know what I was trying to accomplished. You get this thought in your mind that if you post something once that all your followers become informed. And also, you keep posting and begin to wonder if you're over saturating the feed. Some people may give and then unfollow for those 45 days after they've donated because they get sick of hearing about the campaign. That was really eye opening to me, just because you have, in ——- you have 160,000 fans on Facebook, I may have not reached 1/10 of them. I only had about 725 approximately who were contributors to the campaign, so if you think about the number of records —— has sold over the years, probably over 600,000, or even some people who have seen us in Anaheim over the years. That's more than 725 people. Just because you have x number of followers, it doesn't mean you're reaching a considerable percentage of those who subscribe.

Z: Ok, I'm going to ask about the campaign itself, about how you framed the campaign. What was the top amount you asked for? Did anyone give more than you asked? What I'm interested in is how you sold the idea? What did you say to get people interested? It was a big idea. How

was their involvement rewarded? How did you evaluate what you gave back? These points of value differ from campaign to campaign?

M: Well I was leaning heavily on the ——- audience. If I have new music that people can instantly download if they give as little as a dollar If you gave a dollar you were going to get one song and I was going to email that to you. But I always had at least new music, a new song ready to go the day that I started the campaign. So if you wanted five songs from me, then you had to give $5 or more and you'd get those songs. I was relying heavily on the —— audience. As the dollar amounts…um, contributions, there was always...it was always leaning heavily towards the —— fan. I remember I had a $1500 donation contribution which had me driving to your house within certain conditions and timeframes. If I was going be on the road and be coming through anyway, I'd stop by your house 50 miles outside of Chicago for $1500 at your house. T- shirts, posters, cd's, vinyl, all of those more traditional methods of merchandising, I made those the focal point for my rewards for contributions. If I could do that over again, I would've done more research figuring how much these items cost. Because, if only 85 people pay into the vinyl package, that's a lot of money to print just 100. If you print 500 more than 100, it's not much more money, but you have to have some place to store those extra copies. 1 contribution = 1 reward, and that could equal 100 regrets or stressors. There were also unforeseen things to deal with. For me, I made it mostly about just being a ---- fan. Another thing I had was that you could come to the studio for a certain dollar amount and record a song over a two-day period. I think there was 15 people that did that, that was 500 dollars. If you divide that up by hour…that's like $9 an hour, and on top of that I still have studio bills to pay. If I'm in the studio more often because of the CF perk to book time, that money...then that percentage from the CF platform, 10% for Indiegogo, goes away. You pay taxes on that, and then expenses from studio time,

utilities, vinyl, cd's etc., you have to factor that in before you know your bottom line. A lot of people unfortunately don't take it that far, where they think about the expenses and try to calculate them out best they can. But for me, I was having the idea of the ——- community using my time with ——— singing and song writing with ——- was a carrot to help them get interested in the ———- community.

Z: What was the hardest thing about CF? How do you feel after the experience? Have your interactions with fans changed? What would you do it again?

M: I would not do it again. I would prefer to use my own resources, find my own investment through a label or investor as opposed to congregating smaller donations. Even $1000 which is a lot of money, you know, congregating these contributing members to accomplish this goal…even though the money was raised, the ——— community is not functioning right now. So, even the thing that I set out to do I wasn't able to accomplish because I ran out of funding. The promises that I made to people were kept because I promised vinyl and CDs and my goal was to take the left over money and start developing the community. But I didn't forecast the expense report, actually more money was taken away and spent than I realized. You know, I'm a producer too, so a lot of these artists I've worked with over the years, they've used CF to raise money that it's going to cost them to work with me. So, I work with artists on a regular or semi regular basis that use CF to pay me my fee, I wouldn't say that it's not benefitting me. I would say that, you know, to promise somebody something that you don't even know yourself if you're capable of doing, that happens so often with a CF campaign. A lot of times there's a passion to create, and that passion is so strong that you're willing to start that profile and make that video and put that call of action out, and that passion may be completely pure, but doesn't take into account consequences of asking people to give you money for you to create something. Those

consequences are a lot heavier than I expected. What I mean by that is not delivering promises in a timely manner, and taking time to periodically inform your contributors and let them know that there are snags. When you're making a record when you're signed to a label and you have push to back the recording, you don't have to go to your audience via twitter and say, "So sorry we're starting three days later." But when you ask people to contribute, you feel more obligated to let people know what is going on, and it may be someone who has just seen you perform once when you came through Omaha once. That shift in the relationship to where you're now obligated to keep 700 people yo''ve never met, or met once in a meet and greet, or someone whose floor you slept on in 2003. That obligation can get very confusing, tiring, frustrating. And frankly, everyone of those 700 people, or someone who didn't contribute at all but was influential in passing it along, there is a feeling, rightfully so, that they deserve updates and apologies when things are falling behind. They deserve it because they are the reason that money came together that now I can spend on creating something out of nothing, and uh, that customer service was really daunting and more so than keeping account of the expense report. That level of customer service was so exhausting, and even to this day will still come up. You know, it takes a considerable amount of time to get your product finished and shipped, and sometimes people move and you get return mail and you dig through 700 email addresses, well, they are based over seas I used to be it would cost $3 to ship a CD, and now it's going cost $20, but they only donated $15. There are so many factors, and if you're doing something by yourself, where in the past, a lot of these artists will say, "We've been on a label for years and now we're independent and we're so proud of that which is why were coming to you." Well hold on, just understand that there are about 30 things that you are totally unaware of that a label used to do for you; your manager, your agent, your tour manager, the person in the mail room at the label that you never

met. This is now your responsibility and all those things add up, and if you were to put it into an hourly wage you might be making less than $1 an hour. And you know, it's impossible to measure your passion in an hourly wage, but one way to do that is to enter into a CF campaign and log your hours and expenses. And then you can see if it was ultimately worth it or not.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 3

This interview was with a 35-year old white male professional musician, referred to as

Anthony, who plays drums for a pop-rock band. The interview took place on January 24th, 2016

and was conducted over the phone. Troy had not CF any projects at the time of this interview.

Z: How old are you?

A: I'm 35

Z: Do you consider yourself a professional or amateur musician?

A: Um, I guess professional. It's tough for me to say that you know? But I've been touring

forever and playing forever and I get paid professionally to do it.

Z: Is the bulk of your income from doing music in some form?

A: Yes

Z: Ok, so yeah, that's professional. So what do you do? What does that consist of?

A: Primarily, I'm the full time touring drummer for a pop rock band named ———-. that's my

role, and it's pretty good working relationship. I've been able to grow with the band since 2009.

We went from playing for a couple hundred people a night, to now thousands. I'm basically a

hired gun, and I have been since 2009. I used to do session work but I don't really do it anymore,

it kind of got away because of my relationship with ——-. I have to be available at all times

within reason.

Z: How long you been playing music?

A: I started my first band in 1992' when I was 12…um, and that's when I started taking it

serious, so I guess 23 years.

Z: So in that time, you've done touring, been in numerous bands, and now you're the drummer

in ———. How much of your time is devoted to writing and recording music? How much of

your day to day is focused on music?

A: New music? Not a ton. Cause, you work, you create new music, and then there's a cycle that happens. With ——, I'm not really, as far as —— is concerned, recording music too often. I do the ———-thing, where I'll be a part of producing and creating new music for music advertising. But that isn't a main focus for me at the moment. It's more about performing.

Z: So, you're on ——— schedule, and they are not a band that requires you to be on any kind of scheduled 9-5 vibe, it's more like you show up and you're done?

A: Yeah, so last year was a weird year because we were working on a new album and with a band like this, when they are working on new album there are producers involved and the touring drummer is not always involved so I did record some of the tracks, but, they are also heavy in social media (SM) so they have other things going. It's weird cycle. We did 3-4 weeks of shows but that was it and the rest of the time was eaten up working on new stuff which I'm not always involved in.

Z: So you just mentioned SM presence. What does that mean for ——-? What role does SM play?

A: Um, for ——-, would you consider YouTube SM?

Z: Yeah, I would, in terms of something fans have access to.

A: The reason I ask that is because they are the most viewed band on YouTube, they are in the Guinness Book of World records. But with other SM, they have like 3 mil likes, so that's solid. I don't know the Twitter numbers off hand. They were kind of the pioneers of leveraging YouTube and channel all these views into our band and indirectly sell iTunes songs, and then tickets. No one really knew way back in 07-08 if that would translate, they didn't even know. Thankfully it has. So yeah, they do a lot of blogging, a lot of YouTube videos. They kind of own

that space. They have their own gear for shooting and doing post in house. It's a full fledged business. Any band is I guess that is taking seriously I guess. These days, because you don't sell records like you used to, you have to use other channels. And it's no longer where you sit back and write records and tour, you have to put out content all the time and I think they are a prime example of doing that.

Z: So, I want you to answer as you, because your devotion is to BA, but you're not a member of the band correct?

A: Yeah, no, I'm a touring member, but not an actual member.

Z: So speaking as you, as someone who has played in bands before and play in this band now…considering your own experience in the industry? What's your opinion on bands CF for records, both popular and more lesser known bands?

A: Um, it's kind of shifted as it's grown, as the whole idea of CF has grown. Originally, when I saw artists having a CF project that could afford to do their own thing without exploiting their own fan base. But if you're giving something of value, or giving something in exchange for value, then I think it's fine. It's a great vehicle for getting something really cool made and getting fans to appreciate your band as a part of the process. Um, with that said, I do feel like people take advantage of it. And I have an example: a kid named ————-, you remember ——— —- her in town? Well, ——— married my wife and I. His son ——— is a musician and has always played in bands or whatever. He was trying to get this project off the ground a couple years ago, I funded it. A year later, well, looking back on it now it's not a big deal cause he's trying to give something back, but a year later he's reaching out again: "Hey I know we did this," or whatever...I don't know, to me, it rubbed me the wrong way. Hitting all your donors up again to do another project because this one didn't work out the way you wanted to and now you have

this new opportunity and are going to record with someone else. I let the message ride and didn't respond because I'm not going to fund this one. Now, he's hit me up multiple times both through a mass thing, and personally. I feel like it's taken advantage of CF. I don't know, I think it all depends on where you're at in your career?

Z: Did you receive what you were promised for donating?

A: Yeah, I mean, that's why I guess it's a wash…because I did get some songs. But, for some reason, I think it was the wording and the way it was gone about–-the expectation that you did it before so you'll go it again, I think that's why it rubbed me the wrong way. You know, and this more pertains to music, but there are directors and authors who CF to get their project out and...you and I talked about…um…the guy from Scrubs?

Z: Zach Braff.

A: Yeah, didn't he do a CF thing to get a film off the ground?

Z: Yeah he did, it got kind of sketch because he funded his campaign in the millions, but he supplemented that with a private investor to make more money. So as far as the donors are concerned, the investor will get a return, but the donors, they'll get some perks, but….well, you kind of pointed to this: There is an implicit understanding when you engage in this kind of exchange and it's not always spoken. In most cases it's not directly spoken. Like you said, if you're offering something of value to your fans, the distinction between…well, if you have money to do it yourself, why CF? But if you're offering something of value to your fans and you can be part of the process, you can understand why an artist could want to do it that way.

A: I mean, obviously there is less risk involved…it takes that off the plate. I guess being associated with a band like ——- who has such a close connection with millions of people who love the band, they could easily set up a CF and raise one million dollars, but this last record,

every bit of it came out of their pockets. But at the same time, there are probably people that would've loved to have been involved in something like that, like, "I feel I was part of this from the beginning, I helped get this thing made." So, you know, like I said, when it first started happening I thought this was an interesting approach. But I'm such a fan of progression and I'm not afraid of innovation and things moving forward and things changing, and I feel like this is part of that movement to push forward. If you think of disruption, disruption of how you go about our day, I think it's a great thing. If you think about Uber or AirBnB, these things that make people feel uncomfortable, well, that's kind of what CF is for me too. At the end of the day, I am in favor of it, for sure. In some cases, it is taken advantage of and is exploiting people, but I mean, if you come out and say "I have the means to do it but I want do this," then that's totally cool. Be transparent.

Z: It's interesting because the research I've done so far has found that the evaluation of CF is dependent upon the campaign. So, in the case you mention, is the kid doing something wrong? No, not necessarily. But, at the same time, you do express some kind of skepticism as to why he's now asking you again for money that you've already given him.

A: I don't know why it turned me off, but it did. To take a step back, it's not like I didn't get what I was promised for funding. I funded it the first time because I felt like I had to, I did because I wanted to support him. I wanted to help him, but I wasn't into it like a fan. So then when it happened again, that's when it felt like it was charity case. It's like, you kind of let this other thing fall away, you didn't push it that hard to where it was sustainable you know, you got it done, and now you're jumping to this other…I don't know. And then the follow up, the personal text he sent when he didn't hear from me, it was tacky.

Z: Is CF something you would want to do?

A: I don't have any plans to do it. If I had a book I wanted to get published, or to create a documentary, would I reach out to my circle of friends, family or supporters? I don't think I would but it's not because I don't agree with it. Just me as a person, I don't see myself doing it. Maybe I'm wrong.

Z: Are you familiar with the Amanda Palmer campaign?

A: No

Z: She asked for $100,000 and she ended up getting one million dollars in donations. She was criticized in terms of how she handled herself as an artist and the fan interactions she's had. She presented this picture and rhetoric of the artist and how they deserve compensation, but at the same time, she would let musicians play for free on stage with her during her tour. She'd offer them a beer. I mean, if we think about being a Pearl Jam fan and they ask us to play a song with them for this much money….then yeah of course. But in a professional sense, if you have players on stage with you and playing for free, that's free labor that you are benefitted from…then there is a hard ethical line drawn and I think that that line is directly related to the fact that she CF this campaign and raised so much money from it. So if you make a whole lot more money than what you asked, then what do you do?

A: Was it for a record?

Z: Yes.

A: I'm assuming everyone got value out of what the funded, they got what they knew they were going to get. I don't have any issue at all. I don't know the deep details of this story, but if she got one million dollars, everyone still got something. then I have no problem someone making money like that. If people are super stoked to get this product and are willing to go that route…I mean, what were other people saying about how she should've done it?

Z: Well, Kickstarter is very clear about campaigns being projects, and not patronage. The money donated is designated for the campaign itself. They want a hard end date to the campaign and a specific amount to be funded. So if you ask fans for an amount of money, and they donate over the asking amount…does that money have to be accounted for? Does it have to be given back? Or is it about transparency and using the money for something related to the project. So yeah, she has this money and she should use it to further this community that's she's started and that's not to say she didn't do that, but she's gotten criticism for her justification of having that much money. She's defended herself and even written some things about it. There was an article she wrote for the Guardian called "Art is a business", and what is interesting is that now, over the year's art has done to distinguish itself to separate itself from crude business, but now she's owning up to this idea that art is a business. And maybe fans already knew that, but now, the conversation is changing and these new websites are coming into the fore and we are still idealizing this exchange, but the rhetoric is shifting to justify how much money can be made through these campaigns.

A: I just don't see a major issue with this. If the fans see the barometer and they see that she's raised more than she asked and people are still giving, you know, she has something of value that she's offering. and I don't see an issue there.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 4

This interview was with a 34-year old white female professional singer in the pop genre and also writes song for commercials and movies. She had not CF any projects at the time the interview took place. It was conducted on February 4th, 2016 and was done over the phone. She is referred to as Ellen.

Z: how old are you

E: I'm 34

Z: Would you say you're a professional musician?

E: Yes

Z: What kind of music?

E: I do a lot of commercial music for commercials, movie, TV, a majority of that is children's music. I do pop music on the side.

Z: Do you facilitate your professional identity through social media (SM) platforms? A lot of artists use Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, etc.

E: Yeah, definitely I promote some of my shows on Facebook, I let my clients know of some of the bigger items through Facebook and Instagram. That's about it.

Z: Have you ever CF before?

E: No.

Z: You've been doing this thing for a while now, do you have any opinions on CF?

E: I think it's fantastic. I think that by-passing labels and allowing artists to have "investors" that believe in a product, to be able to have investors that you can pay back through perks is so much better than being taken advantage of by record labels?

Z: What about more problematic campaigns where the artist don't follow through? So, as you

mention labels taking advantage of artists, do you think there is an equal concern over artists potentially taking advantage of fan's donations.

E: I do think that's a possibility, from what I understand in my own limited experience of Kickstarter and things like that, is that once they meet that goal they do have to give something as promised back to the investor…and if they don't meet their goal, money goes back.

Z: Yeah, in one sense yes…if money is not raised then the money goes back….

E: Ok, so if those terms are laid out and then not, but if the terms are violated by the artist, then that is an issue. But if I say I'm going to fund an album…then that seems to be a problem.

Z: Yes, that is exactly it. There are many degrees of that wrong doing. Some deliveries are just late, but products are often delayed are the in traditional music industries…but with the artist going directly to the fan, there have been issues of artists not delivering product at all, and when I say the artist taking advantage of the fan, CF platforms, as of now, don't really offer any direct lines of legal recourse to go after the artist. Now…like you said, you've donated without really concern over what they are supposed to give you, so you donated out of support…

E: Yeah, I've never given as an investor.

Z: Yeah, so…when someone donates $1000 or $2000, when you think about that much money, then legal recourse becomes more important.

E: Yeah, especially when it's a product other than music.

Z: How is music different?

E: Music is different because the motivation to create or inspiration is not always there. As opposed to an inventor who may have the same problem, they have a more traditional investing experience I suppose. Having a musician you're familiar with, if you're donating to them, then I think people are more understanding if they can't create a piece of emotional work.

Z: so regardless of the methods of raising money, and between a movie or software tech, or music…donating to a musical project potentially changes the parameters of the how this exchange is interpreted between artist and fan?

E: Yes, I think so personally.

Z: So, there's a campaign by Amanda Palmer that was pretty popular. She asked for $500,000 and raised $1.2 million. So, I want to ask you specifically about this. Let's imagine you tell people what you want do and ask for the appropriate amount of money and justify that ask. Kickstarter is clear about doing projects rather than patronage and demand certain terms. In Palmer's case, she played by the rules, and got a lot of surplus money that she is not accountable for because she didn't account for that much money in her plan. So, is there a proper way to use that money? Is there an obligation to tell fans how you're going to use that money or not? Considering the money was given freely?

E: I think she has an obligation to tell her "investors" how she's going to use that money, and the investors, or "the board" to approve that." And of course, it has to be done musically.

Z: So she has to tell them, and do something related to what she was going to do?

E: Yeah, maybe not directly related to what she wanted to do initially. If she doesn't need that much money, then she has an obligation to tell the funders what exactly she is going to do with it. Because it is a business investment even though either party may not look at it that way.

Z: So you keep using these business oriented terms, but also, you said before you gave to a campaign as a supporter…so, when you invest you're a fan, but with the hypotheticals you use these other terms.

E: I don't see a difference. In any contract you have, it's only there to help things along when something is bad.

Z: So they are in place to protect?

E: So if there's a problem, or the situation evolves from what it was…then you rely on these terms to fix it.

Z: So, but with CF, there are very limited rules that the artist has to follow. So Kickstarter provides the mechanism, but not a framework that address wrong doing. In one case there was a book with misogynistic content, parts of which were plagiarized. It reached its goal, but it upset a lot of people. Kickstarter, didn't give the money back.

E: Yeah, I think that's ok. Even though, they believed in this author, and they were wrong, but they still gave money.

Z: So, it's like buyer beware?

E: Yeah! If you're happy with the product, it doesn't mean you get your money back.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 5

This interview was with a 26-year old white male musician. He is a semi-professional singer/songwriter in the folk genre. This interview occurred on January 30th, 2016 and was conducted over the phone. He is referred to as Troy.

Z: First of all, how old are you?

T: I am 26

Z: Do you consider yourself a professional musician? Or amateur?

T: I consider myself a semi-professional.

Z: How much time is spent writing music?

T: That depends on the week, I would say 2-3 hours a week.

Z: You said you were semi-professional. Do you have a job?

T: Yes.

Z: How long have you been playing music as ———

T: Semi-pro? Probably four years.

Z: I know you have one record that you released relatively recently, and you've played some shows, what..regionally? Nationally?

T: Primarily regionally. But I've gone as far we as Colorado.

Z: How much of your interaction, as an artist, is on social media (SM). Do you rely on SM a lot to maintain your presence and make yourself visible?

T: Absolutely, I rely on SM heavily.

Z: Is something you have to keep up with daily, maintaining your brand, interacting with fans, etc?

T: No. I uh, I don't spend that much time maintaining it. I just maintain when it's time to for

promotional purposes. Otherwise I'm pretty quiet. I'll start promoting 3 weeks prior to a show, and then closer to the week of the show. Otherwise not that often.

Z: Have you CF?

T: Yes.

Z: When did you CF and what did you CF?

T: I CF my first album ——— in 2012/2013?

Z: Why did you decide to CF?

T: For a couple reasons. 1. Finances. 2. I needed affirmation that it was even worth doing in the first place and I felt like if people wanted to see it happen, it would motivate me more. And they did and it did. Um..and also as a trial for future releases. I've never gotten into that world before, just kind of seen it from afar. It was for the experience, but mainly for financial reasons.

Z: Do you remember how much you asked for?

T: $4,000.

Z: What were your perks like? How many tiers did you have in the campaign? What as the highest amount you asked for? I want to know how you valued what you asked for.

T: Here let me check.

Z: Was this through Kickstarter or Indiegogo?

T: Kickstarter back in the day. I think the it was in 2012, album came out in 2013. Ok, back to earlier, I had fourteen tiers. Many of which were at the same price point the top tier was $500, and that was a house show. I had one backer on that.

Z: Was that house show limited to range?

T: No. I made that show up on a tour while I was in Missouri. It was a "get to you while I can" kind of thing, unless you paid me to get there.

Z: So, at the time you were just trying to make a record and didn't have a large fan base to draw from. But you, you were younger and doing it for the first time. What kind of stuff did you offer?

T: It was mainly media. The album was the main draw. I offered early release, I did, yeah, I mean, I was young. I didn't have much to offer. Other things were simple. I did the lyric sheet thing, linear note thank you's, I did CDs that were filled with demo recordings of the songs on the record. I did some quirky fun stuff. People could submit modifications and I'd record the modifications in a fun way. I did personal songs for people that I hope never make it out in the world.

Z: How many backers did you have?

T: 67 backers pledged $4,315.

Z: What was the experience like? What did you learn? Did it stress you out? Did you enjoy it?

T: Yeah, it stressed me out and I don't like to ask anybody for anything. As essential as that was to making that happen and potentially kicking off something that became very serious…it was a pain in the butt. It becomes your baby for thirty days, you have to promote it every day and you feel like you're bugging people because you are. At the same time, with the way the internet is, it's going to find a new audience every day even if finds someone you already found. I'm just not the type of person that likes bothering people or posting on SM that often period, um, and if I had to do it again, I would shrink down the tiers. Pretty much make it solely about the music. Either you want to hear it or you don't.

Z: Would you do it again?

T: I would consider doing it again, slightly smaller scale for an EP or something.

Z: You mentioned that you don't like asking people for things, or bugging people through SM for things like this how do you think the fans experience it? How do you handle yourself knowing

that…if you don't like doing it, how did you present it? You said you did this out of necessity, so what is your opinion on CF as an artist? Do you have strong opinions on it?

T: Yeah, well…I feel that the second someone invests in you pre-product, their investing in a bias instantly in a way that if your favorite artist are releasing a record, you know, you can be disappointed or excited once you hear the record. But when people are contributing funds, in many cases large amounts of money, hundreds, at times thousands, that's a lot of pressure to create your own art for me. That puts a stamp on that it isn't entirely yours and that's what makes it so beautiful is that you're giving people an opportunity to invest in you as an artist while simultaneously giving them the feeling of ownership to an extent. That might be the wrong word, at least a feeling of impact. I think that's awesome and scary. Um, so…that's why, if I did it again it would be just about the music and get rid of all that other stuff, because as someone who does often give to CF campaigns, I usually don't want anything. (For) tech stuff, I want my rewards. When I want music, I just want to help the record come out and that's about it. I don't know if people think the same way as me and maybe the feel more invested because they contributed financially to it.

Z: With that in mind…contributing large amounts of money is a risk to take with no easy recourse for donors to track down what they were promised. So, I want to ask you about Amanda Palmer and her campaign, and not about whether it was right or wrong, but how you would feel in that situation if you were Amanda Palmer in terms of the tensions you mention, which includes discomfort in asking people for things, and the pressure you feel as an artist, but at the same time recognizing the exchange as one that the artist and fan can experience together. With Palmer, she got more money than she asked for…what would you do if that kind of thing happened to you? If you got more money than you asked for for a project you listed out on the

campaign website keeping in mind the considerations you have regarding the right or wrong way to be an artist in this situation.

T: It's a tricky one because I don't feel like an artist should be held accountable for someone over doing something. If you're ceiling is $10,000 and you're not hiding it (I know PledgeMusic does percentages so you never know how much is being given), if you're doing Kickstarter or Indiegogo and you hit a $10,000 ceiling in twenty days and you have an extra ten days and people keep giving, it gets a little confusing for me because first of all, at that point I'd say, "we did it, we're done." But if they keep contributing there are always expenses, and I think most people, at least in the independent community, the true independent community (not meaning the A. Palmer) I think most people try to bottom dollar it. Um, so I think there will always be more expenses. I just wanted enough to record a record but anything extra, I can find a way to spend that money. I can press CD's or vinyl, I can make the aesthetics more professional, I can use that money to pay publicists. There are ways to spend it. It's a very expensive world. A short answer: it depends on how much extra money is coming in. If it was tens of thousands of dollars, I would start to feel a very certain way about that...how to return that money? I don't know, but I'd look into that process.

Z: Would it be something you'd feel obligated to tell to the donors what you are doing with that excess money? KS is very clear about it being a specific goal with a time limit and financial goal. So, with the campaigns…that money can be laid out in terms of how it's being spent. But does the transparency extend to this new "extra" money if they are giving knowing full well that it is above the goal?

T: I wouldn't feel obligated but I would do it. Um, just..that's who I am and It think that's the only fair way to do it. Even 1$10,000 more than you asked for, I can tell you right now five

things I would use that money for. There are ways to spend ten grand in 5 minutes; a website, some time with a publicist. If people are still giving' money, I don't think anyone will be offended if you are telling people where that money is being spent honestly and you have a separate account for this particular purpose. But if you give $10,000 extra and I don't need to work for two months, that is money I can get on the road now, I have a full time job so…give me the opportunity to take time away and work for a couple months, not only am I feeling guilty, but eternally grateful.

Z: Why do you think your campaign was successful? And what was the hardest part?

T: I think it was successful because I didn't go for that much money. I think, I was very self aware of my place in the music world at the time. I don't know if a $10,000 campaign would've been successful and that's actually the type of money I needed. I didn't use the campaign to completely fund the record, I used it to help me fund the record and to affirm that I should be making on in the first place. I feel like that if you are unsuccessful there is a reason, maybe not musical reason, but timing, or the amount you asked for. But I think at the same time, to make a good record, if you don't have the knowhow in the comfort of your own home, it costs some serious money. The fact that I didn't ask for a lot of money and played my butt off extensively while the campaign was going...I was at every open mic five nights a week and would talk to anyone who seemed interested. I wasn't too in everybody's face, the posts were subtle, never dramatic. It was never "if we don't do this it's over." It was just something I wanted to do and I think people understood that I was passionate about and always had been, and at the end of the day, it was nice to see friends, family, and strangers help me out.

Z: What was the hardest part?

T: Recording the songs.

Z: For the campaign itself…

T: Um, the timing of the whole thing. I put a time stamp on something I didn't reach. I think we went over three to five months on the expected release date, and at the time I didn't realize it was something to really stress about. The communicating with everyone letting them know what's going on, constantly, in a way that actually keeps them involved and intrigued and not bored with it. At the same time displaying sincerity which is extremely difficult through the internet. For me, it was a looming fear that people didn't understand that I was genuinely sincere about what I wanted to do.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 6

This interview was with a 39-year old white male amateur indie rock musician, referred to

as Eric. The interview occurred on January 31st, 2016 and was conducted over the phone.

Z: How old are you

E: I am 39

Z: Do you consider yourself a semi-pro musician?

E: No…um, I'm a retired musician that puts out stuff for fun now.

Z: You put out something recently right?

E: Yes, it's called ———-

Z: So for that project, do you do a lot of social media (SM) stuff for it? Or is it pretty hobby-ish?

E: It's pretty hobby-ish. Um…For the next record, we might toy with the idea of something like

CF. For me, I get nervous about doing a CF thing because I don't want to be that person that

doesn't get the funds. It just seems like super embarrassing..like, "Hey yeah, we want to do a

record! We need $3,000," and we get like $200 and we're like "Oh shit!"

Z: So you haven't CF before?

E: No, but I will tell you, I wish the CF thing was around when I was doing it. I really like the

CF model when it's done (correctly). I mean, I don't thing it can be used wrong. I don't want to

go on a tangent but….

Z: No, please do! I know we come from the same genre world (scene), you've been touring for a

long time and there are these weird perceptions and rules as to how things should be done. Weird

or not…it's a culture we both came up in and have been going it from before the whole digital

transformation. Why do you like CF, what worries you? What do you think?

E: For me, it really closes the gap between fan and artist to where it's like, "We want to do this,

you know…come with us!" The ones that I've seen done successfully will bring you on the journey with them. "We're going to do this record, you join in and we'll give you videos, come along with us, I'll show you, you get a sneak peak." And for a fan? I'll pay whatever for that stuff. I know Jeremy Enigk is doing stuff, and he's doing the whole CF thing and has got all these updates and little songs that come up. That's awesome! As a fan, that's a way to bring the audience closer to you. In such an age that's like, so weird. It's so weird out there right now with music. I know a lot of people who don't like CF because they feel like it's begging and disingenuous, but I think it's perfect. I think it's great. Some examples, um, Eisley (an indie rock group from the United States) did one. They did one where it was, "Hey we're going on tour, we all have kids now and we want to bring them on tour…and you the fans….pay for it." And the fans said, "No, we're not going to pay for it," and I love that. I think that's awesome. That's where I draw the line. But when you have like, "Hey, I'm recording a record, you get demo stuff, a sneak peak, you get this you get that." That's awesome to me."

Z: So, when you think about concepts of value, the artist in this case is asking for an amount of money…it ranges from like $20 to upwards of sometimes $3000 for certain things. You say, if the fans are willing to donate, which implies a value for the fan and the fan is giving freely, there is something more valuable than the record itself.

E: Yeah, you can get records anywhere at any time, so that's not special. Someone puts out a record? Cool, I can get it for free wherever I want. But I don't have access to videos of you writing and goofing off in the studio, or demos no one hears. That's where the value is to me, and I think the fans can dictate that, which is great for me because it's no longer the artist making the shots, it's the fans making the shots. "Hey we want you to fund bringing our family out," and the fans go, "No, there's nothing in it for me. I don't want that so I'm not going to pay for that."

Z: Do you remember how much they asked for?

E: $100,000

Z: That's a lot of money. Do you think it if it was framed differently, maybe something about recording a record and, "We want to do it this way to get an great audio experience, etc.," so it's more about the record; do you think it's how much they were asking, or what they were asking for?

E: I think it's what they were asking. I don't think the total price really matters. Um, because as a fan if I'm just putting in $5, I don't care if you're raising $100, but what am I getting for my $5?

Z: So you're just saying that this campaign didn't work because of what they asked more than how much they asked for. So there are lines, or mistakes that can be made where fans are not ok with what is being asked to be funded. So, there are negotiations that can occur. As you said, CF allows this direct communication between fan and artist about a particular thing and if the fan likes it, they'll fund. So, do you think there is a lot a band could do wrong? Any campaigns you've seen?

E: That's an interesting question, and there are no rules and that's both a good and bad thing. It's the wild west and we're trying to figure out what this all means. Do you know about the Amanda Palmer campaign?

Z: Yes, I was going to ask about that.

E: ———- donated to that, she's a huge fan. She asked for what, $100,000? to make a really great record and the fans gave her 1.2 million dollars or something? So everyone got on her, "what are you going to do with that?" She said she's going to reinvest in her live show, and the audience loved it. The critics didn't, it was weird. Because it brought up the whole moral issue, but I think that is where the fans dictate. I don't think that there's a moral thing involved, and I

think that is where we make mistakes. You know, if you're badmouthing Eisley about what they asked for, about funding their lifestyle, no one said that but the critics. The fans though, they were just, "that's cool if you want to do that, but I'm not interested in that, but I'm not bad mouthing you." That's what I think is really interesting about it.

Z: So there's a difference between commentary and the actual campaign itself when it comes to fandom…

E: Amanda Palmer always brings people up to the stage to play on tour, and critics were like, "You made all this money and you're not going to pay these musicians," and she responded, she was like, "I didn't know that was a bad thing, they agreed to play, but I'll pay them." That's the cool thing about this CF thing, if fans or critics say it's not working, then the artist can adjust.

Z: So, with CF and the idea of surplus money, ideally, the campaign lays out what is going to be done with the money asked and, "this is why I'm asking this much." Kickstarter is very particular about their rules, about the hard financial goal and the end date. So, what obligations arise for the artist after they reach their campaign point and still take in money? Amanda Palmer, according to you, reinvested or expanded on her goal, but the artist does not have to account for that money. What if she just takes the money and buys a new house and does something more akin to taking free money?

E: That's where the exchange of goods comes in. If I'm going doing a CF and I say you give me $5 to help me, and I give you access to x, y, and z and that's what you get for $5, why does it matter if a million people said, "I like that product and take it, I sold my goods for a price that you agreed on." Why would we punish someone for being successful?

Z: So if giving is un-coerced and given in full transparency, any surplus is something the artist can take and use as they wish as long as the donor gets what they were promised?

E: If I buy a Coca-Cola, I don't care what they are spending that $1.50 on, I bought my Coke, that is the price of goods."

Z: I'm really interested in that analogy, and Amanda Palmer makes that analogy in a piece for the Guardian called "Art is a business" and she's kind of owning up to this idea of art being a business. And we've all kind of known this, but we don't like to talk about that too much. When artist try to sell something, especially in relation to CF, it's never about costs, but it's always put in terms of value. So, there's this shift here that Palmer has taken a lead on. She turns around says, "yes this is about money," and so she's owning up to this idea of running a business. But isn't this a totally different discussion now? It's all about economy now, but the whole rhetoric is all about community and bringing art into the world, about dreams coming true, and realizations of art. So Palmer can get this money and do what she wants to do, so the idea of collective community is potentially unfulfilled. So like you said, there are no rules and some campaigns don't deliver at all, some campaigns take private money as well as public money which complicates money made on the project itself. So there's a question of what the fan values and is willing to pay for, but should the artist ask for what he or she doesn't have to ask for? Currently, there's no system currently in place for the fan to go after the artist for undelivered promises.

A: Yeah, the legal thing is interesting that you bring up, I didn't really think about that side of things. I can see where you're like, "Hey, our top prize is $1000 for studio time," and you don't get that studio time, and there is no way to guarantee that. And that is where the fan steps in and take ownership.

Z: Yeah, so there are costs in reputation.

E: Of course, "If you screwed us over then we'll make it known and no one will buy or support your next venture." So, when Palmer was getting backlash, when fans didn't agree, she changed

it.

Z: Were her fans upset?

E: It's usually critics or people outside. She decided to pay and to pay those who had played previously, but no fans came to ask for money. I think it lies in the fan's hands and that's where I really like this model, and think it's super interesting. But to go back, I want to reverse a little bit to talking about art and business. That's where it can get tricky and critics can use that to draw up drama. At the end of the day it's a business transaction. The artist is asking for money, so where is the confusion when fans say, "How dare you ask for money?" It doesn't have anything to with art until the transaction is returned and the fan likes it or doesn't like it.

Z: There was a band called Marillion from the United Kingdom who CF all of their ventures, and then one time they had money so they didn't CF< and the fans were upset. But another person I talked to said that if the artist has the money, he or she shouldn't ask for money from fans. Do you think there's an exchange between fan and artist valuable enough to chase even the artist does have enough money? Something preferred in the communal sense?

E: To me, it's perspective. If the fans enjoy extra stuff that they give them, then ok, it's like pre-ordering the record. If you preorder the record you're paying for it ahead of time. It's kind of the same thing.

Z: Yeah, but there is a guarantee you'll get the record through a pre-order.

E: And that's a difference, there aren't ways to go after it. If the fans were given $1000 or $10? There's a big difference there.

Z: Some campaigns will ask for $1000 and say they'll put the fan's name on there as executive producer, and we both know that there is no reason to ask for that much money for that perk. Some ask for $3000 for a private living room show, but there are house tours that artists do

where it's not nearly that much money to get in to those shows for fans. So, in terms of asking for money and fans giving that much money as proof that fans want it, do you think it's questionable if you're going to knowingly ask for more than what it costs to produce the perk promised?

E: So, that's where, being a capitalist society, that's what we do. Like, I buy a bottle of water that costs .20 to manufacture, but I'm buying it for $2. What are people willing to pay? If the top tier is $3,000 and the perk is a phone call from me, that's a stupid ask, but if they are willing to pay? Ok. I do think there is a responsibility on the artist, you can't take advantage, but it doesn't mean you can't ask for it. The fans should dictate, It's not exploitation because fans don't have to go routes they don't want to go, but if you're crazy enough and you want that phone call, then go for it. It's your decision, not mine.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 7

This interview was with a 24-year old white male indie musician. He is semi-professional and had not CF any projects when this interview occurred. He is referred to as Seneca.

Z: How long you been in -------?

S: A year and a half

Z: Do you like it up there?

S: Yeah man, it's cool.

Z: For the record, how old are you

S: I am 24.

Z: --------- is not the first thing you've done musically right? You've been in bands for a long time?

S: Yeah, I did singer/songwriter stuff, then I was in a band called------------. And then, I started ------- in 2013 I think.

Z: Is ------- your main ambition?

S: Yeah, definitely.

Z: Was your move to ------- part of that decision

S: Yeah, it's more of a music town than --------.

Z: How engaged are you in social media in terms of promotion, keeping in touch with fans? Have you devoted a lot of time or money to curate a social media presence?

S: Yeah, I spend a good amount of time I guess, doing SM stuff, mostly for the band. Number one way to promote shows and releases I guess. I spent a little bit of money on Facebook ads, but not a ton of money. But besides that I haven't really spent money on Twitter or Instagram ads, it's mostly nickel and dime

Z: So you do Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Tumblr right?

S: Yeah, I do a Tumblr. I use Tumblr as a website because I like the platform. It's easier to update than blogs. I can easily share an Instagram post on Tumblr as opposed to logging in to a third party website.

Z: Do you do any "groundwork," do you still do fliers around ------, or is it mainly social media.

S: It's mainly social media. Usually venues will flier for you. Promoters will send out mass fliers. What's cool about the flyer situation in -------- is that promoters will usually do it for you.

Z: Yes, that's a luxury when promoters put up their own fliers. Ok…have you CF yet?

S: No, I've never used the CF resource.

Z: Do you have any opinions on it? I'm not asking for a hard stand from you, but when you think about people you know that have CF, or, how you see campaigns being advertised or played out, do you have any opinions on it as a musician who's been at it for a while…and you are recording music, playing shows, you've recorded a record that was released last year. In terms of your process, however you did it…what's your opinion on the whole process itself?

S: Um, I'm not against. I think it's a cool way to go. I didn't go that route. Luckily the funding of the record I did last year came through licenses from TV shows made enough money for me to put that towards recording, and I did it with -----, who you know has an incredibly fair rate. We recorded very cheaply. Luckily for -----, the recording process was easier because we didn't use drums, we sampled drums. So, back to the CF thing, I can totally see from a band's standpoint that it would make sense. The only qualms with it come from the fact that I like the idea of a product already being done before I buy it. Some bands will release it digitally and then want to press it to vinyl and that's kind of cool because you can listen to the record, but some will have this unheard record and you have no idea what it's going to sound like, and it's kind of like,

"Hey give money to this record that you have no idea what it will sound like." As a consumer you're taking risk and you have no idea what it's going to look like or sound like.

Z: Is there an ethical qualm? Obviously, it's a weird process to give money towards something you're unfamiliar with, but if it's a band you like, you're giving money based on a history of fandom, or for something you'd buy regardless. So for this case of raising money with these platforms, it's difficult for a consumer to go after the artist if those rewards are met.

S: Ethical meaning what?

Z: Do you think it is a questionable practice? If an artist says he or she cannot record an album without the help of fan, the campaign is successful, the record gains–some success - as an artist, do you think there's an ethical question when it comes to revenue, commodity, and art. In this case we have a direct relationship between fan and artist whereas before the artist can remain in solidarity with fans while being on a record label. If you ask fans directly, this idea of community beyond the campaign; what happens after the campaign? Is the artist still obligated to an idea of community that respects the process was able to fund the record in the first place? You don't have to give me an answer per say, I know it's a long question, but what are your thoughts? If any?

S: Yeah, I mean, I think it's cool. I have seen....there are stories of bands crowdfunding a record, putting it out on a big label, becoming part of the machine, and fans feel isolated because when you dabble in the CF stuff, I feel like you are walking on the line of this DIY mindset you know? "We don't need a label, we don't need a manager." So, if that happens, the fan base might think like, "Oh man, they totally jumped into this label and no' and they don't care about giving music directly to fans this whole idea of community, and they are in this machine, now they are on MTV or the radio, or whatever." It's kind of crazy to me that fans think that way. I think it is a

buyer beware thing. "You funded this, thank you, stay with me even if I become a part of this machine, because, guess what, this machine gives me a career. I can go and play shows now and be on a direct support tour and can pay my bills while I'm out doing what I love to do." I think it is a buyer beware situation, because you do have situations like that, but you also have situations where a record is funded and a band is sitting on 300 copies of a record. The band is not touring, not playing, and certainly have enough fan base to CF a record, but not a big enough fan base to sell out of a record, or to do the other completely necessary things behind a record release, which is promotion and touring. I think you and I can agree that you sell the most records when you're on tour. People buy records at shows because, it goes back to what we were saying before, people want to see the product before they buy the product. If you're blown away with a live show, you're going to buy the record afterward. If you have $15 or $20 in your pocket, you're going directly to that march table afterward and you're buying the record, the t- shirt, whatever. I think, unfortunately, that a lot of artist fall into this idea of like, "Man, I want to see this on vinyl," or, "I want to fund this record, make a record, and then everyone will buy it and I'll make my money back," and completely forget the idea that you have to tour and play shows. There's more work involved to do that whole process. I think unfortunately that a lot of CF situations fall into that shit. All of a sudden we have all these records and we didn't think about. We have to tour and everything. ------ first release was digital only and I toured off that five song digital EP and didn't have anything to sell, I just wanted to get my name out there. And then my next record came out on vinyl. You see that progress. I think CF is a way for some bands to go straight to having a physical product. It took ----- two and a half years before I saw any of it on physical copy. But at the same time, if it's a situation that works, I would hope that the fan base that initially supported the band to CF, then they would stay with that band even if they wound

up being lucky enough to have good enough music and a good enough release to get a manager or get a booking agent, or to make their dreams a career. I hope that the initial fan base would not turn away from that.

Z: Are you familiar with the Amanda Palmer campaign?

S: Yeah totally, she raised like a million dollars right?

Z: Yeah, she asked for $100,000 and she raised like one million dollars. Now, in that case, is that a problem? Would you say that finding yourself, if you consider how CF works: you have fans that offer money and they want something in return, some kind of perk, but as an artist, let's say you find yourself with an abundance of surplus from money that was donated to make a particular product that you spelled out on the campaign. Kickstarter is very particular about it being a project, you have to have an identifiable project (start and end goal, and financial goal). But if you draw in so much money, what's your obligation then?

S: You better have a dope ass product. That's the truth, you better follow though with every single one. Once you hit that $100,000, there's a big gap between that and a million. Maybe around the $250,000 or $400,000 mark. Once you start getting all that money, you maybe think, "This is really rad, but can I follow through with everything I promised?" I don't know what her promises were. If it's like meet-and-greets at shows, or, "I'll call you and talk to you on the phone for ten minutes", whatever that is, I mean, between $100,000 and one million dollars, where do you say, "No more donations?" I'm sure she could call Kickstarter and say, "Listen, you know, this is the most money you've probably raised on your website, can we shut it down?" So…or…you say, "Ok, if I hire an assistant, or somebody to help me out with all of these goals I have to fulfill but still make money," that's even better. Not only am I keeping the thing going, but I'm creating a job. I think that's super cool when it comes to small independent businesses.

Amanda Palmer's music is her small business. On the Amanda Palmer project, that's what should've been done. Um, you know, if she can fulfill all those goals, then yes. If she can't, you have to realize when you're over your head. It's happened to me, I've donated to friends' projects before and haven't seen the product until a year later. One I never even saw it.

Z: So, you're a supporter. Did you follow up on that? How angry were you, if at all, over not receiving what was promised to you?

S: I was upset. It was for ------, and I never got what I was promised. However, that place, at the time, I was able to get gigs there that paid really well. Ok, well, in the long run, I'm not going to make a real stink about this. My donation has now made me $300. Which is a little fucked up because that's me benefitting from it personally, so I'm looking over the whole ethical thing. I was like, "I paid for this, and it benefitted me monetarily, so I'm not going to make a stink." That was a weird sticky situation for me. I wasn't going to go to Charlie and complain about a shirt after he was offering me free drinks and getting me gigs. So, that was a sticky situation.
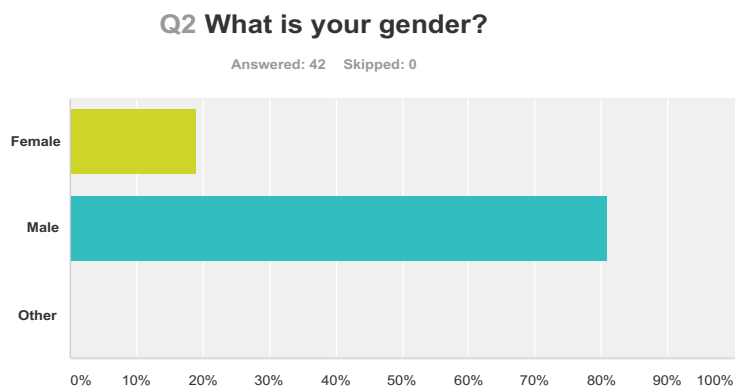
FIGURES

Figure 1. Survey Results: Age

Q1 What is your age?

Answered: 42   Skipped: 0
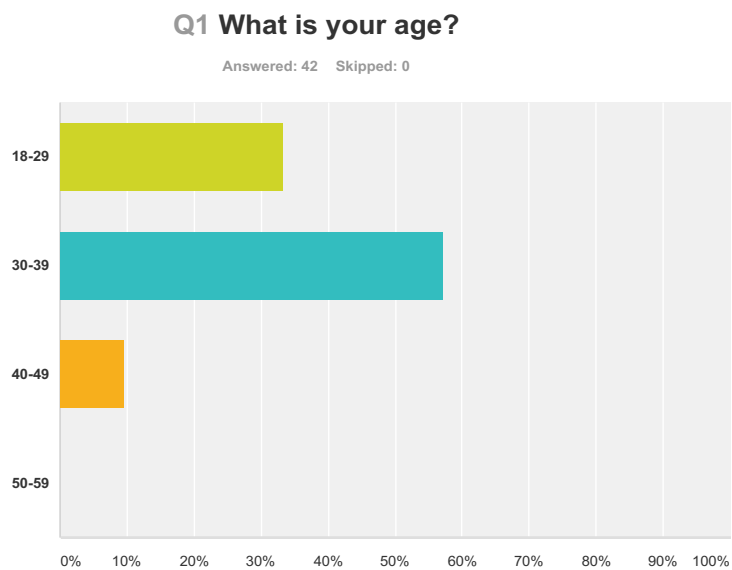
Answer Choices		Responses	
18-29		**33.33%**	14
30-39		**57.14%**	24
40-49		**9.52%**	4
50-59		**0.00%**	0
Total			**42**

Figure 2. Survey Results: Gender

Q2 What is your gender?

Answered: 42   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	**19.05%**	8
Male	**80.95%**	34
Other	**0.00%**	0
Total		**42**

#	Other	Date
	There are no responses.	

Figure 3. Survey Results: Race

Q3 Are you White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander, or some other race?

Answered: 41   Skipped: 1
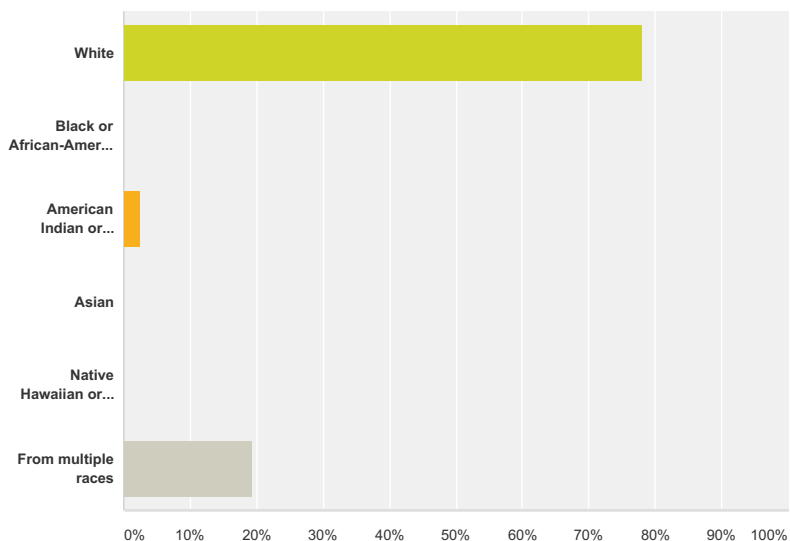
Answer Choices	Responses	
White	**78.05%**	32
Black or African-American	**0.00%**	0
American Indian or Alaskan Native	**2.44%**	1
Asian	**0.00%**	0
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	**0.00%**	0
From multiple races	**19.51%**	8
Total		41

#	Some other race (please specify)	Date
1	1/32nd Cherokee	12/30/2015 10:45 AM
2	Hispanic	12/11/2015 2:15 PM
3	Chinese	12/11/2015 1:05 PM
4	Mixed hispanic/white	12/11/2015 10:40 AM

Figure 4. Survey Results: Education

Q4 What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
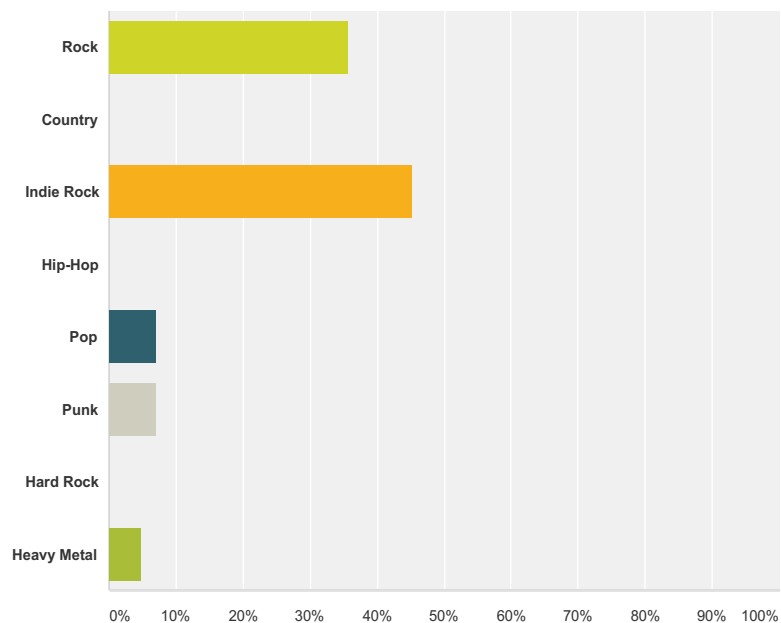
Answered: 42   Skipped: 0
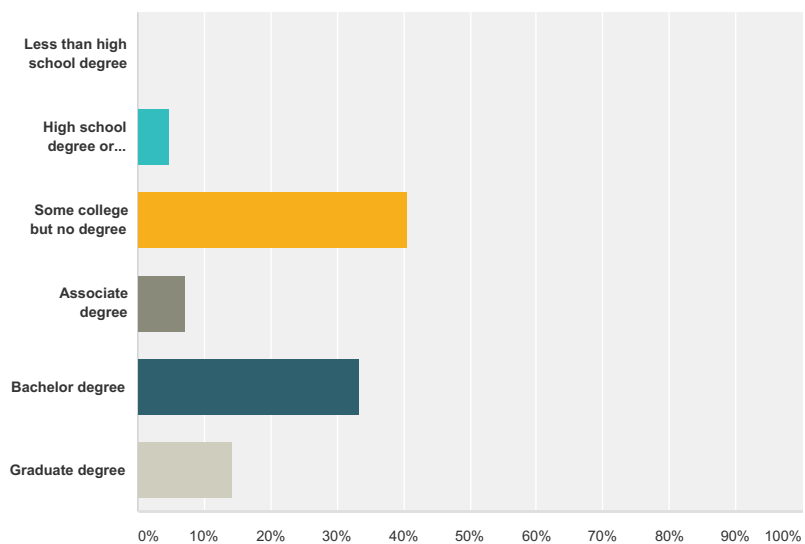
Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than high school degree	**0.00%**	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	**4.76%**	2
Some college but no degree	**40.48%**	17
Associate degree	**7.14%**	3
Bachelor degree	**33.33%**	14
Graduate degree	**14.29%**	6
Total		**42**

Figure 5. Survey Results: Genre

Q5 How do would others describe the type of music you play?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

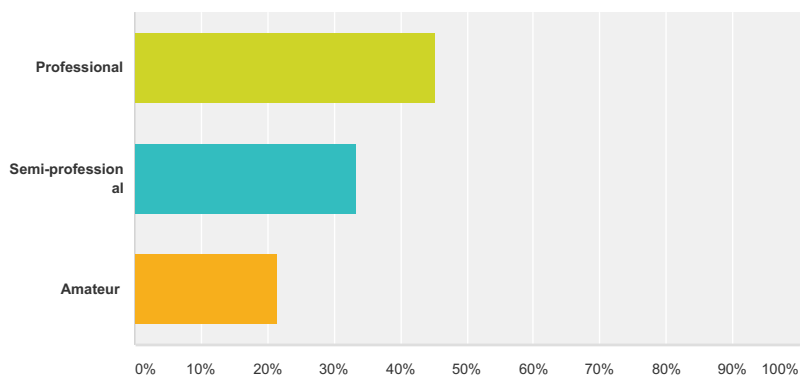| Answer Choices	Responses	
Rock	**35.71%**	15
Country	**0.00%**	0
Indie Rock	**45.24%**	19
Hip-Hop	**0.00%**	0
Pop	**7.14%**	3
Punk	**7.14%**	3
Hard Rock	**0.00%**	0
Heavy Metal	**4.76%**	2
Total		**42**

Figure 6. Survey Results: Level of Profession

Q6 Do you consider yourself a professional, semi-professional, or amateur musician?
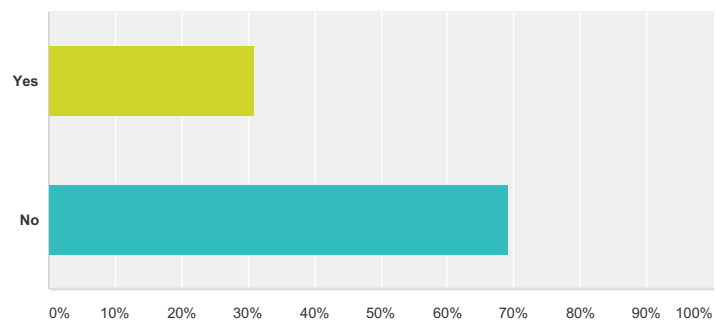
Answered: 42   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Professional	45.24%	19
Semi-professional	33.33%	14
Amateur	21.43%	9
Total		42

#	Description	Date
1	I sometimes will play on sessions I am recording, and on the rare occasion play local gigs in Nashville, or church gigs	12/14/2015 7:16 PM
2	I consider myself a mixture of amateur and professional because in one project I get paid a guarantee for every gig and other projects pay is up in the air. Part of my income comes from being a performing musician and the other from teaching music.	12/12/2015 5:37 PM
3	I'm a professional, but it's not the job that pays the majority of my bills.	12/11/2015 10:57 PM
4	Was a professional for 13 years. Starting a solo effort in music is like starting all over again. So, yes professional but starting again.	12/11/2015 1:05 PM
5	I'd only consider myself professional if I were surviving solely off income earned from playing music. I make money and play/record frequently, but have to work full time to support my lifestyle.	12/11/2015 12:50 PM
6	Even at the highest levels of my "career" I was a barely passable musician.	12/11/2015 11:24 AM
7	I'm a singer and composer	12/11/2015 11:21 AM
8	I'm on retainer as the touring drummer for a band called Boyce Avenue. We tour worldwide, primarily in Europe, Asia and North America.	12/11/2015 11:18 AM
9	professional in the past. semi professional now.	12/11/2015 11:01 AM
10	I play poorly	12/11/2015 10:40 AM
11	A very bad guitarist.	12/11/2015 10:29 AM

Figure 7. Survey Results: Crowdfunding History

Q7 Have you used crowdfunding platforms (e.g. Kickstarter, Indiegogo, Pledgemusic, etc.) to raise money for a musical project or goal?
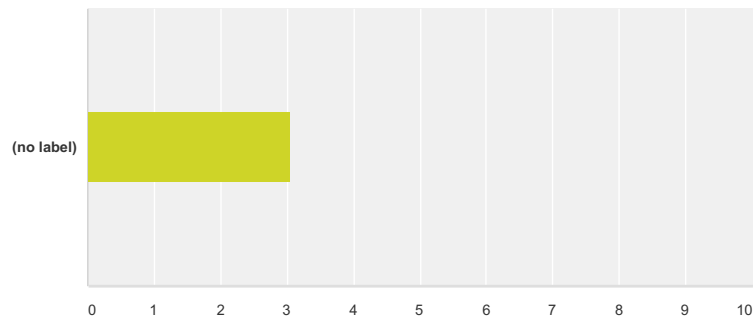
Answered: 42   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**30.95%**	13
No	**69.05%**	29
Total		**42**

Figure 8. Survey Results: Crowdfunding Experience

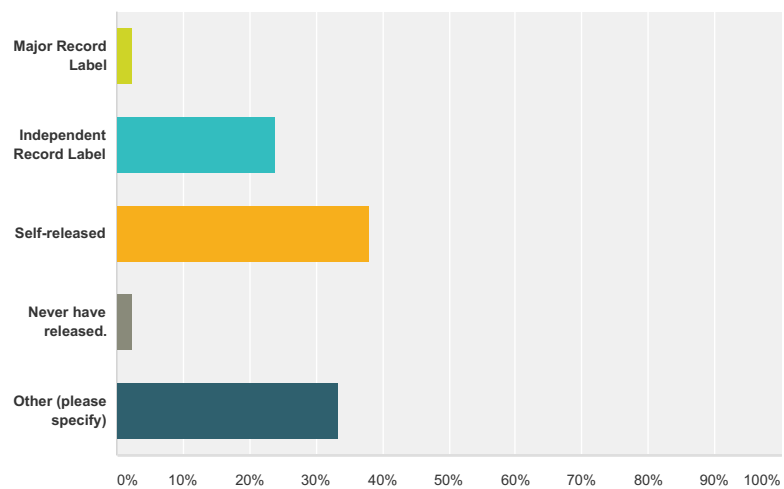**Q8 If yes, how would you rate your experience?**

Answered: 22   Skipped: 20

	Poor	Average	Positive	(no label)	(no label)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	0.00%	27.27%	50.00%	13.64%	9.09%		
	0	6	11	3	2	22	3.05

Figure 9. Survey Results: Release History

Q9 Through what channels have you released your own music? Select all that apply

Answered: 42   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Major Record Label	**2.38%**	1
Independent Record Label	**23.81%**	10
Self-released	**38.10%**	16
Never have released.	**2.38%**	1
Other (please specify)	**33.33%**	14
Total		42

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Gehring, David. (2015). On the Sale of Community in Crowdfunding: Questions of Power,
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