Band and musician branding: How to brand yourself as an artist in the music industry

Category: Branding
written by Stewart Hodgson | 13 October 2022
Band and musician branding is just as crucial as any other form of branding, if not more so. It's common to think of branding as something major companies do to increase sales. However, the reality is every entity trying to build loyalty with an audience needs a brand.

Bands and musicians aren't just creating music to pursue their passion. These creatives are also selling a hot-ticket item: entertainment. As such, every artist needs a memorable brand to ensure they can develop a strong and lucrative relationship with their audience.

You may have noticed elements of branding used by your favorite brands already. Many popular musicians have their own distinctive logo. Most have a unique personality they convey to the world, and a specific approach to marketing their music too.

Today, we're going to look the art and science of branding a recording artist, to help you answer the question, "how do I brand myself as a musician?"

Branding for musicians: An introduction

Branding is essentially the process of developing a strong and impactful identity for a business. It involves using a variety of components, from visuals to specific kinds of language, to connect with customers on an emotional level and sway their

opinions.

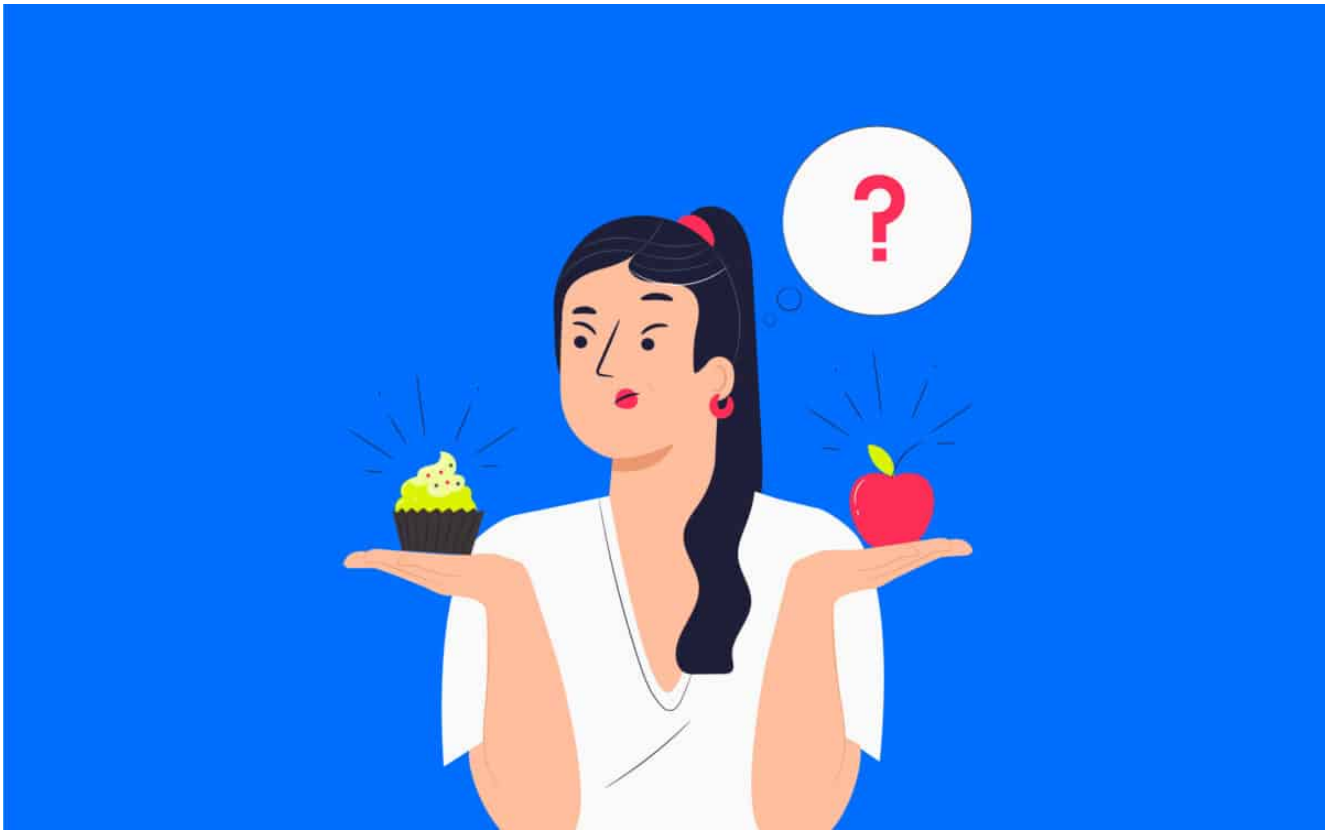
Musician branding is very similar to branding any other profitable entity. Just like companies and corporations, brands need to differentiate themselves from the competition, connect with their target audience, and build brand awareness.

In some cases, band branding can even be more crucial than standard “company” branding.

This is because decisions made about which bands or artists to support are made almost entirely on an emotional level. People seek out musicians who reflect their own personality, passions, and musical style.

There’s no practical product on offer, just a specific experience the band or musician needs to cultivate through not just their music, but wider personality.

Music artist branding is also becoming particularly important as the landscape grows more crowded. There are tens of thousands of bands and musicians around the world today, and new creators are desperately trying to enter the industry all the time.



Is branding a band important? Benefits of a band brand

So, what is the significance of band branding? Why is branding important for musicians, and what are the benefits of having a compelling brand?

Branding for musicians is a key part of building an emotional connection with an audience. The right brand differentiates an artist, gives their listeners something to rally behind, and ensures they can be instantly recognizable in any market.

While the quality of the music created will always be important, it's often the brand identity which really sticks with an audience.

The key benefits of branding a recording artist include:

Differentiation

There are thousands of different bands, musicians, and artists

all competing for a similar audience. Differentiation can help creators to convince their followers to support them over the competition.

For instance, both Kiss and Aerosmith targe a similar audience, but their identities and personality are very different.

Contextual cues

The correct musician branding initiative provides potential listeners with insights into what they can expect from your music.

An album cover or the marketing used for a single can help fans to identify whether the music is connected to their interests and preferences, so they can decide whether or not they want to listen.

Emotional reach

Bands and musicians don't just want their customers to listen to their music. They want people who support everything they do.

As a band you want people to buy your merchandise, visit your concerts, and download your songs. The only way to generate this kind of support is through an emotional connection.

Band branding: Finding your identity

There's no one-size-fits-all answer to the question: "How do I brand myself as a musician?"

Rather, for both bands and standalone artists, a brand should be an extension of the personality and creative vision invoked by the creator. In most cases, branding a recording artist or band will start by identifying the purpose and values of the

entity.

All bands and artists want to create music, but they also have different driving factors behind the groups or identities they create.

Finding your essence for music artist branding includes answering questions such as:

- What kind of music do you create, and why?
- What compels you to create your sounds and share them with the world?
- How does your music reflect who you are as a person?

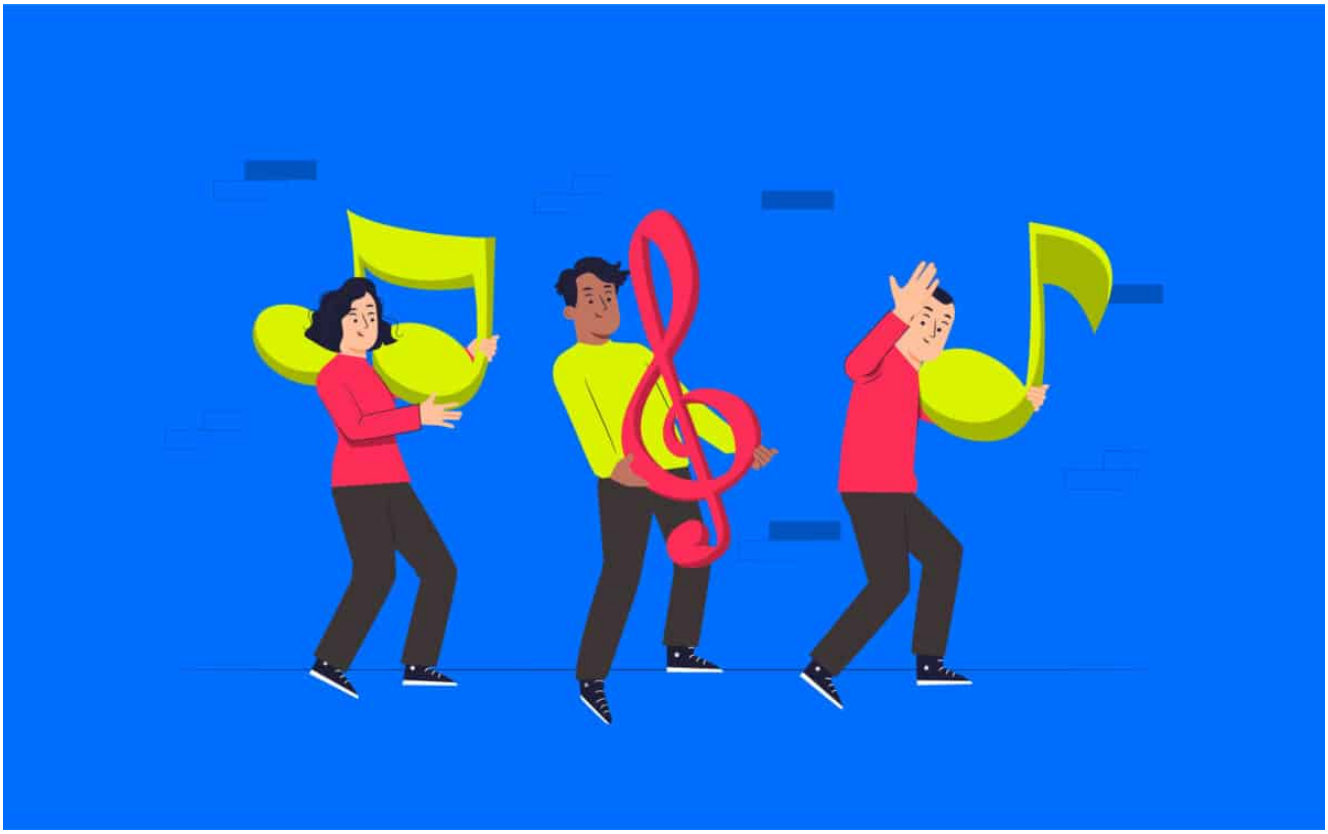
One of the best music artist branding examples reflecting the importance of knowing your "why", is Lady Gaga. Whether you like her music or not, Gaga has built her entire identity around the importance of celebrating your differences and embracing your true self.

Lady Gaga's albums, songs, and lyrical choices all highlight this quest of championing self-acceptance. However, the branding initiative also goes further than this.

You'll also see the artist highlighting the benefits of being different through her outfit choices, her performances on stage, and the causes she supports when she's not performing.

A good way to get to the bottom of your brand identity as a musician or artist is to think about the parts of music, you're most passionate about.

What inspires you about the artists you love or follow? What kind of personality or concepts do you want people to associate with your music? How do you want people to feel when they're listening to your songs?



The crucial steps for musician branding

Learning how to brand yourself as an artist or band can often feel like a complex process. While there are a lot of similarities to simply branding a business, there are some major differences too.

Since everyone has their own sound, it’s difficult to simply research your audience and determine whether you have a viable “product” to sell.

At the same time, because many artists are often inspired by the other musicians they’ve encountered through their lives, there’s often a possibility for some overlap. The risk here is some new brands can often end up sounding too much like their inspiration.

Here are a few steps you can follow if you’re looking into branding for musicians.

Step 1: Know your inspiration, but don't copy

Almost all human beings have a deep and long-lasting relationship with music. We connect with sounds and rhythms from the moment we're born. As we grow, we discover our personal tastes, and embrace certain bands or artists as sources of inspiration.

As an artist, it's fine to have bands you respect, and musical styles you want to replicate. The important thing to remember is you shouldn't simply recreate what other artists are doing. Your band still needs to offer something unique.

Identify the things you like about other groups and use those components as a starting point to start developing your own identity.

Step 2: Define what makes you unique

To ensure you don't simply become a "cover artist" for another creator, you'll need to find something which differentiates your band or entity from others. This means you'll need to identify your "USP". What makes you different to all of the other groups in your niche?

Look at Queen for instance. The group build their identity around discovery, exploration, and experimentation with music. They weren't afraid to go bigger and bolder than the other bands at the time, which helped to make them one of the most recognizable groups in history.

Identifying a few key components which make you special will ensure you have an underlying idea of the kind of identity you want to convey to your audience.

Step 3: Know your core values

Your values in musician branding are how you connect with your customers emotionally beyond your music. While a great song can grab you the attention of your target audience, it's the

underlying values which determine whether your followers will support and advocate for your group.

You might believe strongly in your local community, and write songs about where you come from, while also taking part in smaller events to help the area thrive.

Your values might revolve around sustainability and protecting the planet, which translates into the work you do for the environment.

List your values clearly in your brand guidelines, and make sure you refer back to them whenever you're creating music or designing marketing campaigns.

Step 4: Create an image

Just like branding a company, branding an artist requires the creation of a specific image. Most bands and individual artists have merchandise they sell to promote their group. This means you'll need a logo and distinctive image to grab attention.

Electric Callboy, a German Metal Band focuses on connecting retro vibes with modern rock to create an entirely new image. The visual identity of the group is fun and interesting, which helps to separate them from other metal artists with a darker image.

Your image can be as bold or subtle as you choose. You may decide to go for a more approachable "laid-back" vibe to appeal to an everyday audience. The key is connecting with your audience.

Step 5: Develop your tone of voice

Successful musician branding also requires artists to develop a specific tone of voice. This is the insight into your personality you give your listeners in everything you do and create. Your specific tone of voice will shine through in your

musical creations.

For instance, your lyrics might be deep and thought provoking, or fun and playful.

Notably, a good band tone of voice should also appear in the marketing campaigns you use to build brand awareness.

Weezer is a rock band committed to building a strong community. As such, the group constantly “thanks” its audience for their participation in their shows and works hard to connect with their followers by taking photos with their fans.

When you develop your tone of voice, make sure it’s consistent. Use the same personality in every lyric, social media post, and announcement.



Music artist branding examples for

inspiration

It’s easy to overlook musician branding in today’s world. We often see branding as something specific to companies and corporations. However, a great brand is just as important to a musician as it is to any organization.

If we take a closer look at some of the most famous bands and artists of all time, we can also see how these entities have leveraged the power of branding.

Here are some of the best band branding examples to inspire you…

1. KISS

Possibly one of the most recognizable bands of all time, KISS was founded in New York during the 1970s. In a world full of bands and artists which often looked the same, KISS was keen to make a lasting impact on their audience.

The group embraced tongue-in-cheek lyrics, elaborate performances on-stage, and unforgettable stage makeup to differentiate themselves.

KISS stood out as something entirely new in the music world, even among many rock fans. The group ended up selling more than 100 million albums worldwide, and has a huge fan club full of people with KISS tattoos, merchandise, and more.

2. The Rolling Stones

The Rolling Stones is another highly recognizable band from the rock and roll genre. The iconic band was formed in London in 1962, with a focus on punk concepts like “anarchy”.

The group actually started playing covers of other music. However, they quickly identified with the rebellious and youthful counterculture of the 1960s.

The music the group created aimed to reflect the issues and pains of the younger generation of the time. By connecting deeply with their audience through a punk-rock attitude and engaging lyrics, the group was able to make a long-standing name for themselves in music.

The Rolling Stones also have one of the most well-known logos of all time.

3. Taylor Swift

It's not just rock bands, or bands in general who can thrive when it comes to musician branding. Taylor Swift is one of the most influential artists in the world. She nails her branding campaigns by evolving to suit the interests of her audience with each album.

Taylor is an expert in reinvention. She started with a focus on nostalgia in the "1989" era, appealing to a younger audience of people finding their way into adulthood. As she aged, Taylor Swift's fanbase transformed alongside her.

At one point, the artist even deleted her entire Instagram feed and started teasing audiences with new imagery designed to position her as someone unapologetic and powerful.

4. Greenday

Greenday is an excellent example of a band with fantastic branding. Launched in the 1980s, the group has always embraced a "punk" approach to music, but with a more accessible edge than many other, darker brands.

The music created by the band responds specifically to the issues of the day, exploring everything from war to politics.

Greenday differentiates itself by connecting with its audience on the issues which face them in their day-to-day lives. The group also consistently integrates its fans into its shows, welcoming people onto the stage to play guitar and sing

alongside them.

5. Ed Sheeran

Another great example of an individual artist with a strong musician branding campaign, Ed Sheeran has an approachable, down-to-earth vibe.

The creator wants to be seen as just another person, without the glamour and shine of many other musical creators. He positions himself as a fun and lighthearted person with a consistent presence on social media.

Ed Sheeran also knows how to make a statement with logo and visual choices. One of the most recognizable images in Ed Sheeran's repertoire is the wordmark of his name with a dog's paw alongside it.

The paw is fun, adorable, and engaging, highlighting Sheeran as a human being with a big heart, and a love of animals.

How to brand yourself an as an artist: Top tips

As mentioned above, musician branding can be complex. Artists need to ensure they're connecting with their audience on a deep emotional level. At the same time, they need to be constantly aware of their personal behavior off the stage, and how it influences their image.

Some of the most important tips to remember when it comes to music artist branding include:

Strengthen your personal identity

Whether you're a solo artist or part of a band, your personal brand will make a huge difference to how your venture is perceived. Musicians are judged not just for what they do on the stage, but how they portray themselves in day-to-day life.

As such, every artist needs a strong presence both online and offline.

Be authentic

People form human, emotional, and intimate connections with the bands and artists they follow. Most of the time, they're not looking for a "corporate" image, but something they can resonate with personally.

Creating a transparent and authentic image which expresses true human values is crucial.

Be consistent

Brands work best when they're consistent. Changing the entire image of your band overnight can often cause uproar among fans.

As such it's important to identify who you want to be as early as possible, and show this image whenever you can, across social media, in your concerts, and even in marketing efforts.

Build relationships with fans

Musicians and bands aren't just looking for people to listen to their music. They're looking for advocates and supporters to champion their brand. These professionals need to work hard on developing connections with their audience.

It's important to make your followers feel invested in the development of your identity.

Know when to adapt

Though it's important to be consistent in your musician branding efforts, it's also worth remembering the tastes of listeners can evolve over time. Updating your logo or image for different albums can help you to reach a wider audience.

However, it's important not to lose what makes your entity

unique.

As with most forms of branding, if you're struggling with making your musical artist brand stand out, sometimes it can be helpful to seek out extra support. The right branding agency can do everything from due diligence to market research on your behalf.

This makes it easier to identify the kind of personality and image you want to convey to your audience.

The art of branding for musicians

Musician branding isn't without its challenges. Whether you're building an identity for an entire group or just one person, it can be difficult to stand out in today's highly competitive market.

However, it's important not to overlook the importance of an engaging and emotional brand.

Sensational band branding ensures musicians can connect with their followers on a deeper level. This helps to transform listeners into die-hard fans and advocates, willing to support their favorite creators wherever they go.

If you're struggling with the art of musician branding, consider reaching out to a branding agency or team to start building the ultimate identity.

Fabrik: A branding agency for our times.