


Jonathan Bills	<p align="center"><b><u>"CONTROLLING THE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS IN MUSIC PUBLICITY"</u></b></p> <p align="center">The International Journal of Urban Labour and Leisure, 7(1) &lt;<a href="http://www.ijull.org.uk/vol7/1/bills.pdf">http://www.ijull.org.uk/vol7/1/bills.pdf</a>&gt;</p>	 <p align="center">International Journal of Urban Labour &amp; Leisure</p>
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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of how much control press officers in the music industry have over what is printed about their artists in newspapers and magazines. It examined the nature of publicity and journalism and considered the issues affecting the communication process between them.

The research was conducted through an extensive review of literature relating to the topics under investigation - including a definition of public relations, along with an appreciation of the theory of communication and any current issues regarding publicity control. It was complimented by qualitative primary research into the field, in the form of a series of interviews. This was conducted from two perspectives: that of the public relations professionals (press officers); and also that of the press (journalists and editors).

Key findings illustrated that while there is a sufficient amount of control available to press officers, much of it depends upon variables such as: how the press officer views themselves; how the journalist views the press officer (as a source of information, or as an access point to artists); the size of the artist being dealt with and their demand as a matter of public interest. The research also investigated the effects of the internet upon publicity and found that while it is a useful PR tool, it can also hinder gatekeeping control.

The research was conducted to investigate publicity control from a specific music industry aspect, along with providing an up-to-date account of the issues affecting the topic. The research compliments and builds upon theories and literature whilst advancing current knowledge within the context of music industry public relations.

### **Introduction**

The music industry, as any other industry, would not survive without marketing. It is a key element of the management of an organisation and without it customers would not have access to information regarding the organisation's goods or services. Brassington and Pettitt (1997, p.5) cite the Chartered Institute of Marketing in defining marketing as "the management process which identifies, anticipates, and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably". This implies that without marketing as a function within an organisation, customer requirements would not be effectively fulfilled.

Smith (1998) illustrates that the marketing mix consists of seven elements: Product; Price; Place; Promotion; People; Physical Evidence; Process. This mix is considered by

many authors to be the essential elements of marketing. It is with 'promotion' that this research is concerned. Smith goes on to outline a 'Promotional Mix' otherwise known as a 'Communication Mix': Selling; Advertising; Sales Promotion; Direct Marketing; Publicity and Public Relations; Sponsorship, Exhibitions; Packaging; Point of Sale and Merchandising; Internet, Word of Mouth; and Corporate Identity. These elements form the basis for a promotional campaign, in order to educate consumers about a product or service. The primary focus of this research project is 'Publicity and Public Relations'.

Jefkins (1998, p.6) defines Public Relations as:

...all forms of planned communication outwards and inwards, between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding.

This is a standard definition for Public Relations (hereafter PR) and is backed up by the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) definition, which states that "PR is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics". These two definitions imply that PR is a communication process.

One of the main techniques and functions of PR, according to Brassington and Pettitt (1997, p.787), is Publicity. It is a tool used to "maintain good relationships with various publics". One of the main focuses of publicity is the press, who are used as the main channel of communication in most circumstances - particularly within the music industry. In this context, offices and professionals dedicated to publicity and press relations are often referred to simply as 'PR' when in reality their sole function is publicity or more specifically dealing with the press. The use of the term 'PR' in this research specifically refers to publicity in the context of the music industry.

Brassington and Pettitt outline some of the advantages and disadvantages of using publicity (when compared to advertising, another element of the promotional mix). Advantages are: credibility; reach; and excitement, while the main disadvantage to publicity is uncontrollability. The lack of control in PR is widely acknowledged and understood. The reason for this uncontrollability is simple - an organisation can give information to the press, or to the media, but they cannot ensure that the message will be translated and sent on to the relevant publics in the way it was intended. For example, a press release (a publicity tool) can be sent to a newspaper, but there is no guarantee that any information regarding the press release will be printed - and if it is printed, it may not be perceived in the way it was originally written, or intended to be perceived.

The example above is a very crude model of how control is lacking over the communication process of publicity. This research is concerned with how the process of music publicity functions and how much control publicists have over it. It will discuss in detail:

- The nature of PR,
- The nature of journalism and how it responds to PR;
- The relationship that PR has with the press and its importance,
- Relevant communication models and theories which help explain the process;

- How PR is affected by developing technologies in the modern world;
- Current issues in music/celebrity PR.

This research aims to create and build an understanding of the methods a publicist uses to control their material, as well as investigating just how much control they have over the results of their work. It will examine if and how a publicist dictates to the press what will be published on the subject of their artists/clients and how the press works in relation to this concept.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The Nature of Public Relations - Definitions***

The subject of PR is one which is widely discussed and analysed. Its definition can vary but the essence of its meaning often remains the same. The Mexican Statement (cited by Jefkins, 1998: p.1) gives the following definition:

PR Practice is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation's and the public interest.

This classification of PR applies to the practice when geared generally towards organisations. It implies that PR is not just a means of communicating a message to relevant publics, but a 'science', which relies on an understanding of the relationship between an organisation and its publics. It can be argued therefore that controlling the message to be sent to an organisation's publics depends largely upon understanding and analysing trends along with planning a programme.

Jefkins (1998) goes on to distinguish PR from other elements of the promotional mix - stating that PR relates to "all communication of the total organisation" while advertising is confined to the marketing function of promoting a product. This implies that PR exists not only for the purpose of promotion. Jefkins further illustrates this point by making a distinction between PR and Publicity by stating that publicity is a result of PR. When information is made known, publicity occurs naturally. It is also stated that this is an uncontrollable element, which can be "good or bad for the subject concerned".

Further definitions of PR are described by Kitchen (1997, p.8) who states that it is a communications function for organisations. Kitchen also places emphasis on the two-way nature of this process and establishes PR as a function for establishing and maintaining goodwill (or reputation) as well as being an intelligence function by "analysing and interpreting trends and issues in the environment that may have potential consequences for an organisation". Kitchen outlines four models of PR, one of which is relevant to music publicity. The 'Press Agency' model (adapted from Gunig and Hunt, 1984) has a purpose of 'propaganda' with a one-way communication flow from source to receiver. Kitchen states that this model is used for product promotion, and particularly the arts (including the music industry). It is also stated that this type of PR is used to "get clients' names in papers". This model eliminates the previous assumption that communication in PR is two-way, thereby presenting an alternative form of PR which is commonly used by the music industry. The idea of PR as a

communication process is backed up by Oxley (1989, p.1) who states that “effective PR is effective communication” thereby implying that PR depends upon communication. Kitchen further classifies PR by maintaining that “where publicity is uncontrolled by the source, advertising is controlled in terms of content, media placement, and timing”. This further illustrates the lack of control over PR messages. It shows that advertising as a form of promotion is totally in the hands of the sender of the message, while on the other hand, PR messages are sent without control over what is printed, where it’s printed, and when it’s printed. Sachs (1996, p.19) discusses PR’s role within the marketing mix, stating its purpose is to “communicate key messages to defined target audiences within the marketing chain to influence decisions”. This shows that PR is considered to be a valid part of marketing, and that it does play a role in the decision making process that consumers go through prior to adopting a product. Sachs also states that PR utilises the “use of editorial with implied third party endorsement to inform and persuade”. This demonstrates that there is an advantage of the nature of PR messages being communicated through the press - as it will display to the reader that it is not only the organisation from where the message originated that endorses the product in question, but also the press who are passing the message on. It adds an element of integrity to the message by showing that persons other than the manufacturer approve of the product. This could be in the form of a review, an interview, or a feature in music publicity.

Moss (1995) also shows how PR is part of the marketing process by illustrating that a range of PR functions and tactics support marketing as a function. These include: media relations; product editorial; and feature articles.

The issue of integrity is explored in a more detailed fashion by Bland et al (2000) who state that the fact that journalists are perceived to be impartial, plays a significant role in influencing readers. This supplements the argument of advantages to PR as a promotional function. Further advantages are also highlighted by Brassington and Pettitt (1997). The credibility aspect of publicity is further explored by the comparison to advertising as a paid form of promotion that brings about cynicism within the publics. On the other hand, Publicity is perceived to be ‘free’ and comes from a neutral third party (the press) therefore is more trustworthy. It is not perceived to be only for the benefit of the organisation, but written with consumer interest in mind. Another advantage Brassington and Pettitt describe is ‘reach’. They state that “a good PR story that captures the imagination of the media...gets wide coverage across both print and broadcast media [and] can achieve an incredible level of reach” (p.789), whereas advertising would require an expensive multi-media strategy in order to gain that level of reach. The third advantage of publicity that Brassington and Pettitt describe is ‘excitement’. They state that publicity is “about news”. It will therefore be of current and topical concern and will be exciting in its nature. It is also acknowledged that a story can generate more interest as it builds, while different media vehicles try to gain more coverage on it.

According to Hill et al (1995, p.204) credibility is a particularly important advantage when dealing with the arts. They cite Mercer (1992) in explaining that “PR is an appropriate promotional device for service organisations - the ‘authority’ offered by independent recommendation in editorial matter can add vital credibility to an intangible service”. Although music publicity is concerned with assisting the persuasion of a consumer to eventually buy a tangible product, in the form of a CD for

example - it is also concerned with selling an artist's 'image' to the consumer, which helps aid the process of persuasion. The image is an intangible element of the product, which as Mercer explains, is effectively promoted through PR.

Kotler et al (1999, p.830) offer further definitions to PR by stating that it is an important mass promotion technique that can have a "strong impact on public awareness at a much lower cost than advertising". This concept of comparison to advertising is fairly common, and therefore it can be assumed that PR is regarded as an element of the promotional mix equal to advertising in its perception and value.

With regards to the Music Industry, Lathrop and Pettigrew (1999, p.146) present details of publicity in the context of music. They state: "when people read about a musician, they develop awareness and opinion. Positive opinion increases chance of sale". Not only does this validate the use of PR in the music industry, but Lathrop and Pettigrew go on to describe the three-part job of a person seeking publicity: To get the most coverage possible in a broad range of media; to get coverage in the most appropriate media; and to attempt to control the content of the coverage. The latter point proves that maintaining control over PR messages is of utmost importance. The definition of 'control' given by Lathrop and Pettigrew is to "make sure that articles communicate the desired message".

They state that this is done by "funneling article ideas to 'sympathetic' editors and by suggesting desirable 'angles' for articles". At this point, it is possible to draw a potential method of control for messages. This method involves sending a message to an editor who is more likely to print the article in the suggested way, providing a valid angle has been provided. As further classifications and definitions of the characteristics of PR are described, more control methods become apparent.

Pettigrew (1997, p.14) distinguishes the role of PR within a music context by stating that it is concerned primarily with 'image'. It is also stated that "Building up a psychological imprint of recognition and familiarity is extremely important for developing bands". This shows that PR is important in all stages of promoting an artist, from when they are first launched to when they are extremely popular. PR is a way of informing publics who an artist is, what they are like, and when they are releasing records.

PR within the Music Industry is described by Kercher (2001) with regards to the WEA Records press office. It is assumed that a press officer makes it their job to get as much attention and publicity for their artists as possible. Kercher explains that competition is high, as everyone is competing for the same space in the media. It is also made apparent that the idea of two-way communication does apply in the music industry. A cuttings agency is used to supply items taken from newspapers around the country. These show the press office what has been

printed and provide a form of feedback. It is also part of the press office's business to find out what the competition for specific artists is, and therefore position the artist correctly within the market by pitching to the press a particular angle (which may differentiate from competition).

## **Control Methods**

It has been made clear up to this point that the lack of control over content is of great significance. The aforementioned authors have acknowledged this problem, while only some have provided solutions to it in the form of ways to control coverage ('control methods').

Smith (1993) goes into detail regarding a reduction in lack of control. He suggests that prior to issuing a press release, the publicity officer should check that there are no events that clash with it. An extreme example is apparent when looking at the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. CNN (2001) report that the new CD by 'The Coup' featured a picture of members of the band in front of exploding twin towers of the world trade centre. Although the album cover was designed before the incident, it was due for release afterwards. Therefore the album artwork had to be changed and any news releases containing this artwork should not have been released.

Smith also describes the existence of directories which lists journalists that have reviewed products with a favourable or unfavourable rating. A publicist could therefore check this directory for similar products before issuing releases to particular journalists.

Pattenden (2000) suggests control methods in the context of music publicity. She states that magazines will run a review of a band they are interested in and if they believe that their readership will 'love' the artist, they will run a feature. This implies that a magazine does not have an impartial policy with regards to their opinions on music. This becomes more apparent when looking at the differences in opinion between for example a magazine aimed at an older more mature music audience (such as 'Q') and one aimed at teenage girls (such as 'Smash Hits'). Both magazines ran a review for the album 'Gold - Greatest Hits' by Steps. While Smash Hits reviewed the album in a positive light claiming that it would "be played at Christmas Parties for years to come" (Smash Hits, 2001), Q gave the album 2 out of 5 stars and described it as "like karaoke without the vital burning passion" (Q, 2001).

Hill et al (1995) show that another method of control is to make it easy for journalists to print a story by suggesting a relevant angle. An interesting story will contain action, arguments and views while being useful and of a topical nature, perhaps with relevance to a national issue. It can be argued that in the case of music publicity, some record releases are in themselves a national issue. For example, if a major artist such as The Beatles released an album of unreleased songs, it may be considered of national importance. The main point that Hill et al make is that the development of superior systems and relationships can reduce the lack of control.

Fairbrother (1993, p.7) offers the most comprehensive description of a solution to the problem of uncontrollability. She states that "Journalists pick up on what they think is interesting" therefore it is necessary for publicists to.. choose a newsworthy angle, which is more likely to be followed by the media; target the right places (for instance in the example given of Steps, it may have been better to target releases away from more mature readerships); correctly word a release in a high quality style (increasing the

chances of it being printed as it is); and preparing answers for any questions that may be asked.

To summarise, PR is concerned with communication between an organisation and its publics. This communication, in the context of music publicity, is carried out through the press. The message being carried often serves the purpose of promoting a product (such as an artist or a record release). An identifiable problem with the process is its lack of control, which is affected by many factors including how journalism works and its relationship with PR.

### **The Nature of Journalism**

In order to provide an analytical framework concerning the control over PR messages within the press, it is important to acquire an understanding of the nature of the press. It is through the press, and more specifically, through Journalism, that PR messages are carried. Journalists can be regarded as the vehicle which transports a message from the publicist (or sender) to the audience/reader (or receiver). It is therefore a medium, and the nature of this medium will affect how much control the sender has over the message. Another purpose of gaining an understanding of the nature of journalism, is to provide a validity to publicity and its importance. Looking at how the press is perceived by a mass audience will allow an insight into how PR messages are perceived and how much they contribute to the overall promotional mix.

According to Jefkins (1998) newspapers that are based around political content (generalised as 'broadsheets') will sell on average 400,000 copies per issue in the UK. In contrast, 'popular' (or 'tabloid') newspapers that are not so politically based will sell on average 4 million copies per issue. Jefkins also points out that newspapers print what appeals to their readership and, from a more Marxist perspective, what appeals to the social class of their readership. Essentially, what is printed in a newspaper is what is considered to be 'newsworthy'. This decision is made by journalists and editors while in the process of reporting and is therefore out of the control of a publicist. If an editor does not consider a story to be newsworthy to its readers, it will not get printed. Jefkins (1998, p.81) summarizes the point of newsworthiness by stating that "News is information which is not already known to recipients". It is not always current and doesn't have to be recent but it will fundamentally be of interest to those who receive it. One important aspect of the press, is that it is perceived to be objective by the public. This reflects the concept that messages in PR contain more credibility than those in advertising. Bland et al (2000) point out that newsworthiness of an event or development can be either underrated or over exaggerated by an organisation because they are unable to rate it objectively. It is therefore assumed that only an objective party (such as the press) are able to rate newsworthiness. This further illustrates the point that this element of control is out of a publicist's reach, as they are perceived as 'biased'.

McNair (1996) provides a critique of the nature of news and journalism. It is important to consider the ownership of the press in the UK, as it is primarily these owners that have control over the publications. According to McNair, there are ten publishing organisations that control the British national press. This means that control is fairly limited, taking into consideration that there are around 2000 newspapers (Wragg, 2000), the ownership is not as divided as it might appear. McNair states that 80% of

adults read at least one national newspaper, while around 75% read a Sunday paper. This illustrates the significance of the press and is backed up by the statement that "...newspapers come ahead of friends, family, politicians, or other sources of information when it comes to influencing opinion". This demonstrates not only how important the press is in informing people but also the value which is placed upon it by publicists and its role within the promotional (and therefore marketing) mix. McNair also points out that journalism has an agenda-setting role. This, according to Watson and Hill (1997) means that the press set the order of importance of current issues. Therefore, in broad terms the press decide what is important and what is not - thereby relinquishing a publicist of this decision and therefore of control. Watson and Hill also point out that in a newspaper, it is possible for the reader to ignore the order of priority set by editorial and read articles in the order they see fit. However, it can still be assumed that the agenda setting role of the press has an effect on the perception of stories and the importance within them.

McNair also investigates the concept of press objectivity. According to McNair there are two concepts which underline journalism. These are: Liberal Plurism (the concept of press freedom based on a democracy, meaning that the press is a "voice of the people"); and Objectivity (a key professional ethic or a standard which journalists aspire to). This concept shows that journalism is free from control from outside sources. However, it will not always be possible to maintain this concept. McNair cites Alexander (1981) who reveals that the press is not a "neutral and value free representation of reality". McNair also cites Fowler (1991) in revealing that the press is a "product" which is shaped by an industry and its relationship with other industries. This implies that the relationship between publicists and the press will affect the newsworthiness of events (which in the context of the music industry could include for example the release of an album). It has been demonstrated how the press is perceived to be impartial and objective (thereby projecting credibility onto its content) and also how there is an expectation that this is a standard ethic within the press. However, arguments that relationships with other industries affects newsworthiness must be investigated as it can be assumed that they are an important element of PR message control.

### **Press Relations**

It has already been highlighted that the relationship between publicists and the press is one of the main factors that affect control of messages and content. There are many opinions and views as to how this relationship should be managed, and its impact upon control. According to Jefkins (1998, p.78) this relationship can be referred to as 'Press Relations' and its role is "to achieve maximum publication or broadcasting of PR information in order to create knowledge and understanding". This definition provides an overall basis of the purpose of Press Relations without actually illustrating its importance. However, Jefkins does point out that it is important for a publicist to understand the media in order to achieve good press relations (and therefore a satisfactory amount of control). Jefkins highlights several principles of good press relations which include: providing a service to the media by being a two way relationship and cooperating with its needs; supplying good 'copy', for example good quality pictures and captions which can be easily reproduced; honouring requests, such as providing interviews when requested; providing a reliable verification facility (i.e. if a journalist wishes to check a fact they can do so easily by contacting the



publicist). Overall, Jefkins makes the point that building a personal relationship based on “frankness and mutual respect” is the most important part of press relations. This personal relationship is built up over time and is valuable in maintaining control over what is printed. As a publicist and a journalist have separate loyalties (for instance the publicist is loyal to their client in creating positive publicity while the journalist is loyal to their publisher and their reader by being impartial and reporting the ‘news’) the importance of a good relationship between them is paramount in achieving a balance between what the publicist and the journalist want to be printed.

Oberman (1995) underlines an important aspect of good press relations in stating that researching media, and correctly targeting a message at the right publications, is an initial key step in press relations and maintaining control. Oberman also states that it is important to maintain contact with editors and producers of press, in order to keep up a quality relationship as well as building files on specialist and freelance writers (thereby knowing what kind of information they specialise in and whom to target which stories to). Wragg (2000) points out that if a publicist refrains from ‘pestering’ a journalist, and simply provides relevant material, then press relations (and therefore the “success rate” of getting articles printed) will improve. Wragg goes on to illustrate that the purpose of press relations is not just to issue press releases and respond to press enquiries, but to enhance a clients reputation, as well as inform and influence the target audience. Wragg points out that effective targeting is the main point of press relations and audience should be considered as well as the message being conveyed. It can be helpful to talk to the press in all occasions. Therefore if a publicist only reports positive stories to the press, and never bad ones, the press may become cynical of that publicist and reduce the amount of control they have over what is printed.

Lathrop and Pettigrew (1999) discuss press relations with specific reference to within the context of the music industry. They state that the media is a provider of mass communication channels, which provides feedback through reviews of products (such as CDs) that illustrate how it is being perceived. Lathrop and Pettigrew also point out how the press need music publicity as their readers are often in demand of entertainment and music news and ‘gossip’. Therefore it can be assumed that the relationship between music publicists and journalists is more two-way than that of a general press relationship as described by previous theorists and authors. Lathrop and Pettigrew provide a model of the interdependent relationship of the mass media and music industry (appendix 1.1). The model shows that the media rely on publicity from record labels for the purpose of content, as much as publicity relies on the media as a method of communication to the consumer (which is equally important to both parties).

Therefore, press relations in the music industry is based on mutual gain, more-so than perhaps press relations in general. Hill et al (1995, p.20) summarise the importance of press relations by stating that “developing good systems and working relationships [with the press] can minimize the risks involved” (i.e. the risk of a lack of control). This shows that generally, a good quality relationship between the press and a publicist can help maintain a degree of control over the process of publicity.

A current issue highlighted by Paton (2001) with regards to press relations is the concept of ‘selling in’. Paton reports that ‘selling in’ is a process whereby a journalist is privately approached by a publicist, and paid to write a story which is seemingly impartial. The journalist will only get paid for the story if it is properly pitched to the

editor and gets printed. This is an unethical method of press relations and gives publicists the power (and therefore control) to have an approved PR story printed as an objective report. This shows that PR as an organisational function, is not always run according to traditional methods. Therefore the theories discussed by various authors cannot be considered the correct and only way that PR works. It would appear from the concept of 'selling in' that PR is very much based on case examples and does not always follow set patterns and methods. However, by bearing this in mind when studying PR it is possible to gain an overall understanding of the processes involved. It is without doubt that maintaining a good relationship with the press helps to control a publicity message, assisting it getting printed and more desirably printed as it was originally written or intended to be printed.

### **Communication Theory**

It has become apparent from taking into consideration the differing views and opinions on PR, that its practice is rarely straight-forward or restrained by set methods and standards. However, an overall understanding of how the process works can be achieved by studying the theory behind communication processes. According to Smith (1998), communication is not simply a one way flow of information. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that a publicist simply gives a story to a journalist, who in turn prints it for the mass audience. There are many factors that come into play in affecting how that message is sent from sender (publicist) to receiver (audience). Smith explains the concept of 'noise' which are factors that distract or distort the message. Noise could come in many forms and Smith's interpretation of Schramm's 1955 model of communication shows that noise affects the encoding and decoding of a message while it is sent to the receiver. Watson and Hill (1997) state that the sender and receiver's "field of experience" affects the encoding and decoding of a message. Therefore, Schramm's model illustrates that the way a message is perceived depends on the receiver's background knowledge of a subject. Schramm also introduces the concept of feedback, which illustrates how the communication process is circular and not just one-way.

Smith (1998) also provides an account of Katz and Lazarsfeld's two-step hypothesis (1955). This hypothesis implies that mass messages are filtered from a sender, through opinion leaders, to the mass audience. The press could be seen as these opinion leaders and they provide advice for the public on products (such as music). It is assumed that the mass audience relies on opinion leaders and formers for their perceived credible views and information. Therefore, in applying this model to the music industry, the public as a mass audience of music will look to journalists to provide opinion on a music product before making their own opinion or a purchasing decision. This illustrates the importance of PR as a marketing function.

Maletzke's 1963 model of the mass communication process (appendix 1.2), as cited by Watson and Hill (1997) provides a comprehensive overview of the factors which affect the mass communication process (of which PR can be considered one). Watson and Hill point out that the model illustrates how the communicator's self image will impact on and be influenced by the message itself. The message is also influenced and dictated by the constraints of the medium through which it is sent. This is then influenced by the receiver's image of the communicator and vice versa (where the communicator is perceived to be the press, this explains the 'credibility' aspect and

how the press is perceived to be objective). Maletzke's model shows that the receiver is influenced by many sources other than the media message on its own. There are elements that are out of reach of the original sender (the publicist) as the receiver's self image, personality structure and social environment all play a part in how they understand what is being communicated. Therefore a publicist can never have complete control over how their messages are received because they cannot control these aspects of a receiver's environment. Their control is limited to the communication between them and the press (which in the case of Maletzke's model are the medium).

An important aspect of communication theory to consider is that of 'gatekeeping'. According to Watson and Hill (1997), every message passes through a series of gates in order to reach its intended target. Gatekeepers are described as the figures responsible for controlling these gates and may allow some information through as it is, while some gets changed or diverted completely. According to Watson and Hill (1997, p.91) "the selection or rejection of material is made according to a set of criteria determined by a number of factors". These include: gatekeepers class background; their attitudes to world values; and the values, norms and wisdom of the organisation for which they work. Therefore it can be assumed that the press is not only a medium for PR messages but also a collection of gatekeepers. Gatekeeping begins with the Publicist translating raw facts into a publicity story in the form of a press release, phone call, letter or even photograph. Any of the tools used in Music Publicity are subject to a conscious or subconscious series of gatekeeping exercises by the publicist who creates them. When this is transmitted to the next stage of communication, through journalists to the press, it is subject to more gatekeeping from more parties. The journalist receiving the information will decide which parts if any of the story are newsworthy and will then write their own account in the form of a report or feature. Gatekeeping occurs after that moment when the story is edited, printed and juxtaposed with other stories or events which may affect its overall perception. So long as a publicist can maintain as much control as possible over the gatekeeping process, they can maintain a significant amount of control over the effective communication of a message.

### **PR in the Modern World**

Smith (1998) provides a brief overview of how the internet, as a relatively new medium, is affecting PR. The internet has become an important marketing tool, and the music industry is having to adapt very quickly to the possibilities and advantages it offers to consumers. In the context of publicity, the internet can offer a wider distribution of press releases, as they can be sent globally in an instant at a fraction of the cost of traditional mail. Websites can now act as information centres on artists, allowing the press to gain up to date information on a subject without talking directly to a publicist in person. The internet also offers a source of feedback as newsgroups and message boards can be monitored to discover true public opinion of an artist or product. Future PR can then be tailored to this opinion. Smith also acknowledges the role of gatekeeping in PR and describes how publicists are seen as gatekeepers from the perspective of the press. If a journalist wishes to know information, they approach a company's PR department who act as gatekeepers, releasing only the information which is necessary or positive. As the internet allows instant access to more company information, it weakens the gatekeeping role of the publicist. However it can be argued

that effective PR will ensure that there is no undesirable information available on the internet for the press to find. Smith also points out how the internet has reduced the amount of control a publicist has over the tailoring of a message to a particular audience. In the traditional sense, PR messages can be changed depending on where it is being aimed. For example a press release aimed at a quality national newspaper might highlight different features of an artist than one targeted at a teen magazine. Where the internet is concerned, many different audiences (or 'publics') now have access to the same information. The internet may reduce some elements of control but increase others. It is with further research into the field can its effects be monitored in practice.

### **Current Issues**

The issue of PR control has recently become part of the headlines itself. Kevin O'Sullivan (2001), the show business editor of The Mirror, reports that Piers Morgan, the editor of The Mirror, has placed a ban on all celebrity copy approval. This means that celebrities, and their publicists, are not allowed to see an article concerning them and change it prior to its publication. O'Sullivan refers to this practice as allowing stars to "vet the results of their encounters with writers" and states that copy approval has "formed the backdrop to many a major exclusive". This shows that the press will often give publicists the right to control what is printed in return for an exclusive review or interview. It highlights the interdependence between the press and PR in the music industry, but as O'Sullivan points out, a journalist's "professional pride" is at risk if copy approval is granted. The decision at The Mirror was made after Frank Skinner allowed the paper to serialise his autobiography if he was granted copy approval. He proceeded in disallowing the paper to print the best parts of the book for his own gain. Cozens (2001) reports that Piers Morgan made the official announcement in an advertisement in Marketing Week magazine. The advertisement took on the form of a letter addressed to "Mr and Mrs Celebrity" and suggested that control seeking publicists should contact the advertising department of The Mirror, rather than seeking editorial.

The Mirror's "War on celebrity PR" not only highlights one of the ways in which publicists can gain control over content, but shows how it can be considered to be unethical and against the spirit of journalism in general.

### **Conclusion**

Following an extensive review of the literature available concerning Publicity and how its messages are controlled, it is possible to focus on several main elements of control and their drawbacks. Firstly there is the relationship between publicists and the press. The quality of this relationship impacts upon how the publicist is perceived and may assist in gaining more controlled editorial coverage. Another factor aiding control is targeting. Providing a story is correctly targeted, taking into consideration the readership of the publication it is being targeted at - control can be increased. There are more alternative methods of control including the concept of 'selling in' where a journalist is paid to write a story in a certain way, which is considered to be unethical. There is also the concept of copy approval, which as is apparent from recent events, has become more of a regular occurrence over the last few years. However it is also considered to be unethical. The concept of controlling PR messages refers in this

instance only to sought after editorial coverage, rather than another major function of PR - 'crisis management' which deals with managing unexpected issues to the benefit of the organisation. Within music publicity, there are instances of crisis management, where an artist is reported to have done something that may damage their reputation or cause public outrage. However, this research focuses mainly on publicity as part of the marketing mix, i.e. publicity which the organisation chooses to gain.

Taking these factors into consideration, it is possible to build a framework from which to conduct primary research into this field of study.

### **Research Methodology - Purpose of Investigation**

The purpose of the investigation was to gain a complex understanding of the types and amount of control a PR professional exercises over the publicity they acquire through the press, and how it is achieved. It was deemed necessary to gain a perspective of this issue from both a PR and journalism standpoint, as it is through journalists that publicity is attained.

### ***Research Approach***

Due to the nature of the research subject, a qualitative approach of data collection was deemed appropriate. According to Blaxter et al (1996) qualitative research was more appropriate in this instance as opposed to quantitative research as it is less concerned with a basic numeric form and focuses on exploring smaller numbers to attain a depth of data, rather than breadth. With a specialist issue such as music publicity, which is essentially a 'business to business' area - it would be inappropriate to question consumers and more efficient due to time constraints to analyse a small number of circumstances in depth. This is in contrast to the possibility of quantitatively analysing a large number of music industry professionals and risking a low response rate. Quantitative data is more concerned with analysing trends in a sample base rather than in special features, while qualitative data is a form of descriptions. It is more complex and more distinct (Arksey and Knight, 1999). The control of music publicity is such a specialist area that it required data to provide meaningful insights into processes and relationships, rather than statistics and trends which might have been produced from quantitative data.

### ***Sampling Methodology***

Oliver (1997) states that there are two types of sample: probability, and nonprobability. A probability sample is one which is random. Data is gathered from random sources and no background knowledge is used to determine the sample. Therefore the sample is measured without a researcher's conscious input allowing the results to be unbiased and uninfluenced through personal preferences. Non-probability sampling is more defined and can also be referred to as 'purposive sampling' (Blaxter et al, 1996). In a purposive sample, the researcher judges the background of each research subject/data source, and this approach was utilised in the instance of this research. This is also known as 'stratified purposeful' sampling which illustrates views from different levels and subgroups of an organisation or profession, thereby allowing comparisons between different views and relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The sample base for this research was selected from two areas of the music industry - PR and Journalism. PR companies and record label press offices were contacted as part of the PR sample, along with national newspapers and magazines selected from music industry directories and editorial pages of magazines for the journalism sample. In total, 50 PR professionals were contacted along with 50 newspaper (those which contained music news/reviews) and magazine editors/writers (both music magazines and lifestyle magazines with music news/reviews). Initial contact was made through electronic mail in the form of a request letter to ask permission to interview (see appendix 2.1). Due to time constraints, this was a sufficient sample base, taking into consideration that many of the candidates would be unable to take part, while at the same time the data attained would be both rich and diverse thereby providing an effective grounding for analysis and discussion.

### ***Data Collection***

Interviews were used as a method of data collection for this research. Two semi-structured interviews were designed based around the same topics. One aimed at PR professionals, the other at Journalists (appendix 2.2). Two separate interview structures were necessary due to the nature of both professions. Interviews were constructed considering relevance to the particular profession they were aimed at but both covered the same topics. For example, it would be ineffective to ask a journalist how important press releases are to them for writing articles, and then ask a PR professional the same question, as they do not write articles. Oppenheim (1992) discusses the advantages of interviewing over questionnaires by stating that they usually attain an improved response rate and allow for an explanation of the purpose of study to be given more convincingly than in questionnaires. This allows a context to be set from which the interviewee can base their responses around. It also avoids the likelihood of words being misinterpreted through alternative usage. For example asking a question about control over publicity could be interpreted more than one way - making it necessary to effectively set a contextual framework in which questions can be answered.

Interviewing was deemed an appropriate method of data collection as it allows depth and clarity of responses. Interviews also allow for relationships between aspects of a situation to be explored (Arksey and Knight, 1999). According to Oliver (1997, p.111), Interview research "produces data of a detail and richness which is difficult to acquire in any other way". Another method of research that interviewing was compared to during the consideration of data collection was that of case studies. However, according to Bryman (1988), case studies might provide too much generalization as they are based on a single setting. This may lead to issues being analysed from only one point of view. For the research subject, it was desirable that a wide range of backgrounds and examples be used to gain the best possible overall understanding of the subject matter and its surrounding issues.

The interviews were initially arranged via electronic mail, with the interviewee having the option of when, where, and how the interview was to take place. This was necessary due to the nature of the music and media industries, meaning that respondents are likely to be very busy and therefore unable to dedicate a lot of time to such an activity as student research. This method allowed for the maximum number of respondents with a minimum amount of disruption to their work. The

interviews were semi structured, meaning that they were scripted but flexible - therefore allowing follow up questions and probes, which explore an issue in greater depth and maximise the response. According to Arksey and Knight (1999), this type of interview is the most common in qualitative research.

The interview participants represent an effective stratified random sample as per Miles & Huberman's guidelines. As can be seen from the participant chart (appendix 2.3), the PR professionals interviewed work with a wide range of music genres while the journalists interviewed write for publications with varying readerships and topics. The varied responses allow for results to be comprehensive and thorough while encompassing a wide selection of attitudes and opinions, which represent the overall industry from a small sample.

A pilot interview was constructed and tested in a mock situation among mutual colleagues and an acquaintance in the PR industry. Discrepancies in the pilot interview were highlighted and a final interview was constructed based upon these findings. Changes included additional topics along with the redefining of probes to extract more in-depth information from the respondents.

### ***Data Analysis***

Analysis of the findings was carried out using an 'interpretive-descriptive' approach (Maykurt and Morehouse, 1994). This approach was concerned with describing what was understood from the data obtained while reconstructing it in order to begin building a theoretical framework. The concept of 'Epoche' was considered in order to suspend personal prejudices and judgements thereby making the data less biased.

The analysis was carried out inductively, therefore patterns and themes were derived from the data without being directly imposed upon it prior to analysis (Patton, 1990). These patterns were organised by both indigenous concepts (the themes by which the data was gathered, i.e. the topic of an interview question), and sensitising concepts (what is directly obtained from the data after collection has commenced). From these patterns it was possible to construct various typologies upon which to base discussion.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), coding data is a way of analysing it. Coding should be based upon Bogren and Biklen's 1992 framework consisting of: setting/context; definition of the situation; perspectives, ways of thinking about people and objects; process, activities; events; strategies; relationships and social structure; and methods. This framework was utilised when carrying out Maykurt and Morehouse's (1994) interpretation of the 'Constant Comparative Method' of analysis. This consists of four stages: inductive category coding and comparison of units of meaning across categories; refinement of those categories; exploration of relationships and patterns across categories; integration of data showing an understanding of the people and settings (and processes) being studied.

In order to carry out constant comparative analysis, the interview transcripts were divided into categories based upon themes and concepts brought about by the interview plan along with issues raised in the interviews themselves. These themes were compared to one another, taking into account the nature of the 'twosided' research taking place (one interview for PRs, one for Journalists). Following this

`coding', a framework was built around the different concepts and their relationships examined in detail.

## **Results**

The interviews conducted were based around themes generated through the literature review. Two interview schedules were constructed and these can be found in appendix 2.2.

Displayed below are summaries of all interviews conducted, highlighting the main points that were made. Each summary is organised into different categories depending on the theme of what was said in response to certain questions. Descriptions of these categories can be found in appendix 3.1.

### ***Press Officers***

#### ***Rob Saunders - Vital Publicity 15/02/02***

- Tools: Press releases are standard, followed by phone calls. Mass emails sent to people to keep awareness high. Doesn't believe many read Press Releases, so the simpler the better - follow up calls are more important. Harder to say 'no' to someone in person.
- Press Relations: PR based on relationships with journalists - they can and will do favours for press officers.
- Targeting: Writers/editors get angry when they are approached with information that doesn't suit the publication. Clients always think they are headline news. Important to get information to magazines where readers are music buyers.
- Control: Journalists only write about what they believe to be good, relevant, or what their readers want. The key is finding an angle that makes them believe the information is relevant.
- Copy Approval: Believes the ban to be ill advised - celebrities sell papers. If papers ban approval, celebrities go elsewhere - as circulation levels are similar and make no difference to PR campaigns.
- Internet: Online presentations maintain and create perceptions. In music publicity the internet is a 'word of mouth' tool.

#### ***Karon Maskill - Borkowski PR 93/02/02***

- Tools: Press releases used to follow up telephone pitches. Email and events also used. Relationship with the press is essential.
- Targeting: To the right publications is essential, although it is also important not to 'ghettoise' clients.
- Control: High percentage of control maintained over coverage content.

#### ***Heather Williams - Sainted PR 09/02/02***

- Tools: Commonly used are: press releases, CD-Rs, biographies, and pictures. All used to provide background and samplers of forthcoming releases for review.



- Press Relations: Press relationship should be solid and trusting. Knowing a journalist well means they will trust judgement. Journalist has to like product before writing about it.
- Targeting: Imperative to reach target audience of artist.
- Control: Control over who to target and securing articles and covers. Able to establish size of article etc. Content control harder, depends on targeting and artist relations.
- Copy Approval: Ban will make for more interesting and objective features. Does not affect own business as type of artists would not demand such control.

*Dave Arcari - Buzz Publicity 10/03/02*

Tools: Uses press releases, internet and email.

- Press Relations: relationship is very important and impacts upon amount and type of coverage obtained.
- Targeting: Targeting right publications very important. Can waste time if targeting at wrong publications which may affect their future decisions when dealing with you.
- Control: can only maintain a little control, it's up to the journalist.
- Copy Approval: Agree with Piers Morgan's decision to ban copy approval. Does not affect own business as Buzz functions as a supplier of facts and information as leads.
- Internet: has an effect on publicity and what is communicated to the press.

*Andrew Preveser- Andy Preveser PR Ltd. 11/03/02*

- Tools: Uses press releases, launches, parties, gigs, video services. Getting media to see artist live is most direct way of reaching them, but for getting information across, telephone and press release communications favoured.
- Press Relations: Relationship is key to persuading writers that the artist is who they should write about. Good relationships can sometimes guarantee a good review.
- Targeting: Works in league with parent record company to establish who the target market is. Mostly common sense.
- Control: Big artists can demand copy approval and choice of photographer. Things that happen outside of music are harder to control. Smaller artists have less control - balance between allowing as many people as possible to be exposed to them and risking chance that some of those people will not like them.
- Copy Approval: Ban is positive. If artist is of stature to ask for it, they should know what they're getting into. If you don't want to risk it, don't do it in the first place.
- Examples: Sting once made a controversial remark about ecstasy and UK drug laws. It provoked a tabloid backlash and it had to be counteracted. Sting had to qualify remarks and make himself look honest and realistic.
- Internet: Access to information is easier. Both PR and Journalist are better informed about new bands etc. It is difficult to keep information confidential. New music can be downloaded by anyone - world has got smaller.

*Amanda Williams - Amanda Williams PR 20/02/02*

- Tools: Uses press releases, photos, phone calls, biographies. Must be a rapport between PR and Journalist for them to accept these calls.
- Press Relations: Has changed in recent times. Knowing lots of people reasonably well is better than being 'best friends' with one or two people.
- Targeting: Very important and must comply with publication deadlines. Targeting alters over time dependant on how an artist is marketed outside of PR.
- Control: Can usually lead towards an 'angle' but not dictate what is said. If there is trust in relationship, journalist may be more honest. No commitment by the press. Things can be changed at the last minute despite previous agreements.
- Examples: Outhere Brothers' explicit lyrics caused uproar, but due to their image sales were unaffected.
- Internet: Journalists usually telephone a publicist to check facts before publication. Sometimes information gets leaked before it has reached the press office.

### **Journalists**

*Chris Amos - Editor Now UK. 08/02/02*

- PR Information: Important for checking facts and obtaining quotes.
- Process: Considers if readers would be interested or if information is of use to them.
- PR Relations: Important as contact point - enjoys socialising.
- PR Communications: Speak to press officer to chase copy, information, images, sample product, organising interviews, and review copies. Contacting PR on demand important due to deadlines.
- Decision Making: Considers own interest and readers interest, likelihood of pictures, and space in magazine. Does not write a feature just to promote a PR client.
- Copy Approval: Ban means truth can be reported but often manipulated or exaggerated anyway. Copy Approval in Now UK is fine because it allows bigger artists into the magazine - seeing as it has a small circulation, this is more important than ethical issues.

*Richard Smith - Journalist. Gay Times 20/02/02*

- PR Information: In Gay Times, 'panic PR' occurs - where press officers don't know who to target to, or no-one else is interested. Can suffer by being sent too much information.
- Process: Consideration into own interest, and reader interest. Serious journalists do not re-present what is written in press releases.
- PR Relations: Press officers are better disposed to someone they know well, someone who they can trust.
- PR Communications: Most communication conducted by email, but phone calls used to confirm or set up an interview.
- Decision Making: Decisions based on reader interest. Not an arm of the PR industry.

- Copy Approval: shows increasing power of PR companies. Either you are interviewed or not. Journalist's first duty is to the reader - but major artists can demand copy approval and ethics are forgotten.
- Internet: Good for research and gaining background information.

*Peter Robinson - Contributing Editor. NME. 06/03/02*

- PR Information: Some news items written entirely from press releases with added content from a phone call to PR. Information is selective and concerns facts. Press packs providing previous cuttings can provide a good background.
- Process: Some press officers are useful others are not - so it depends who you deal with at the time.
- PR Relations: Press officers for big acts can be difficult - they hold all the cards. It's vice versa for new acts but journalists need good relationships either way. Must be based around trust and mutual respect. From press point of view, PR gets in the way of bands.
- PR Communications: Reviews need to be written before a record is released so journalists need the product far in advance. PRs can invite journalists to the office to listen to a record for review. Interviews are also organised through press officers - they control access to their artists.
- Decision Making: Some PRs tell you what to do and who to pitch stories to when you are freelance. The decision about liking a record is a personal one and press officers can't change that.
- Copy Approval: Most pop stars are trained anyway. Approval is agreed before an interview. Quote approval is an alternative route, where you send quotes to the PR out of context. Not many magazines are happy about giving copy approval - it sets an awful precedent for PR and the industry and makes for less interesting features. However, it can be the difference between getting a celebrity or not and they sell magazines.
- Internet: The internet is notoriously inaccurate but without it work would be less informed, less accurate, less colourful, and less punctual.

*Will Kinsman - Editor. The Fly 07/03/02*

- PR Information: Press releases are used to form the bulk of news and feature planning for magazines - and are indispensable.
- Process: Entirely dictated by relevance. Many press releases are bulk mail sent to all publications - a lot of what is received is irrelevant.
- PR Relations: PRs are an essential source of information and access to artists so relationships are important. Only one publication can ever get an exclusive and good relationships increase chances of getting it.
- PR Communications: Speaks to press officers daily. Press officers who fail to return calls or are generally unreliable tend to find it harder to get coverage.
- Copy Approval: Under some circumstances it can only be possible to get an interview if you agree to copy approval. Copy approval makes you reconsider a feature - as a point of principle.
- Internet: The biggest effect is delivery of information. Press releases now available online or emailed allowing for a faster flow of communication.

### *Anonymous Freelance Writer- 08/03/02*

- PR Information: Most press releases usually discarded - but if a record is good then the press release is read. Releases can be essential when writing reviews as they give exact facts.
- PR Relations: A lot of money can be earned if PR people think you are a nice guy - relationships important.
- PR Communications: PR holds the keys - records, tickets, information on bands. Nothing worse than a press officer who won't return calls - especially when deadlines loom.
- Decision Making: Decisions lie within integrity - in the quality of the record. Sometimes it can be of political interest to cover a record or band - i.e. if it pleases both the publication you work for and the PR.
- Copy Approval: Stranglehold of access thanks to PR. Only mega-stars would usually be granted copy approval, in order to get the exclusive. • Internet: Principally, exclusives are affected - NME exclusives are already exhausted in the mainstream press before NME hits the shelves. The repercussions of the internet's effects have still yet to be fully resolved.

### **Discussion**

To investigate control over the communications process in music publicity, it is necessary to consider the views and perspectives of the practitioners and professionals that work within the industry.

As the research conducted was carried out through investigating two separate professions of the music industry (PR and Journalism), a discussion must be constructed based upon each individual component before analysing the combined resulting framework. Firstly it is necessary to evaluate the phenomenon of PR control from the perspective of PR professionals and press officers themselves. Then, a discussion can be created based around the viewpoint of journalists and the press. Once these two angles have been investigated it is possible to consider the overall phenomenon.

### ***The PR Perspective - Tools***

According to the findings, the single most commonly used PR tool is the press release. This is sent to journalists giving information of release dates, news, tours, and other information which the press officer desires to be printed. This is usually followed up with a telephone call which, according to Rob Saunders, is to gain an understanding of the journalist's opinion of an artist as well as find out if they plan to write anything concerning them. However, Rob Saunders negates the validity of press releases in stating "I don't believe many read the press release - if they do they only skim them and short releases at best". Therefore it is necessary for the press officer to construct short and simple releases which are more likely to hold a busy journalist's attention. This initiative is supported by Jenkins (1998) who states that the PR writing style can affect publish-ability. It can be argued that constructing effective press releases is a form of controlling information - it is controlling whether or not a journalist will be interested in a specific subject. Other tools highlighted by the research include: CDs, photos, artist biographies, and live events. Andrew Preveser states that "if one can get the media down to a showcase/live [personal appearance], it's the most direct

way of reaching people". This shows that more control can be gained through a direct approach such as physically presenting an artist to journalists instead of just sending CDs and press releases. Andrew Preveser also points out however, that "telephone and press releases tend to be the favoured form of communication" as they are less time consuming and get a lot of information across in a short time.

## **Press Relations**

According to Rob Saunders, "Relationships are everything. PR is based on relationships with journalists". This immediately illustrates the importance of press relations. Rob Saunders goes on to explain that journalists will grant favours to press officers they know well and can often write about something that's not worth writing about, thereby giving the press officer a substantial amount of control.

It is necessary for a journalist to know that a press officer will often supply them with useful information (that which will be of interest to them, and to their readers) so building up a relationship is important to illustrate that point. According to Heather Williams, the press/PR relationship is a "solid and trusting" one and if a journalist knows a press officer they will trust his/her judgement on a particular artist. This is another method of control as the journalist is more likely to be interested in an artist if someone they know and like is recommending them - and would therefore be more likely to write a positive feature on the subject of them. Andrew Preveser backs these points up in stating that "sometimes a good relationship with a writer will guarantee a great review in a paper that you otherwise would have no control over". This reiterates how press relations can be used as a method of control and confirms that press relations minimizes risks in PR (Hill et al, 1995).

Amanda Williams expands on the subject of press relations by stating that simple functions of PR (such as the press release) cannot be carried out effectively if there is no "rapport" between the press officer and the journalist, for example a journalist is less likely to accept phone calls from someone they don't know. Amanda Williams goes on to exemplify that press relations has, in recent times, become more concerned with width of contacts as opposed to a small number of high quality relationships. This shows that although the relationship is important to control, it is also necessary to strike a balance between being "best friends" with several journalists and having a large number of contacts you are only acquainted with. This maximises coverage whilst maintaining control. The concept is supported by Jenkins (1998) who outlines principles of good press relations as establishing a reputation for reliability and building a relationship based on frankness and mutual professional respect.

## **Targeting**

The relevance of targeting as a control method is demonstrated by Rob Saunders who links the concept with press relations by stating that "editors get annoyed when people phone them attempting to sell something to the wrong magazine". This therefore jeopardises the relationship between press officer and journalist which affects control, as previously discussed. This is expanded upon by Dave Arcari who states that targeting to the 'wrong' publication "wastes [the journalist's] time... and puts them off future relevant information". In this sense, targeting is simply part of press relations,

which is supported by the literature relating to the topic (Wragg, 2000; Oberman, 1995). However, it can be expanded upon by examining the concept from a different perspective. Andrew Preveser explains that the press officer must work in league with artist's record company to establish who the target market (and therefore the target audience) of that artist is. It can then be established not only which publications they want the artist to appear in to reach that market, but also which publications would be most likely to cover that artist in a positive fashion. Andrew Preveser states that while targeting can mostly be attributed to the common sense of the press officer, there is a key task in identifying the right publication to "sell" an artist to. Karon Maskill addresses the importance of targeting while at the same time discussing how it is important not to "ghettoise" artists, meaning that it is often undesirable to target artists at a small fragmented market, thereby "pigeon-holing" them and making them 'inaccessible' to a large percentage of music buyers.

Amanda Williams further explores the issue of targeting by explaining that its relevance as a method of control is also concerned with timing - "you can miss a deadline at Q magazine, for example, by calling a fortnight too late, even though it's a monthly publication". Considering that the issue of control in publicity is concerned with gaining coverage at specific times (to coincide with record release dates etc.), this is an extremely important point. Bland et al (2000) add credence to the concept in stating that timing is an important element to the press, and press releases are most effective when there is little other news available.

Another important point that Amanda Williams addresses is that targeting can often relate to taking a chance. In the example of the 'Bloodhound Gang', Amanda managed to secure articles in teen and gay magazines even though a month before hand it was "unheard of to place such an artist in those types of publication. It is critical to note at this point that chances of gaining coverage in certain publications are not only influenced by the press officer (although it is primarily their role to do so). Chances are increased by how other parts of the promotional mix have been pitched. The tone and style set by other elements such as advertising will give an artist an 'image' by which journalists may judge them, particularly when considering writing about them and whether they would be suitable for a specific publication. This concept highlights the role of PR as an integrated factor of the marketing mix, supported by Kitchen (1997) and Sachs (1996).

### **Control**

The findings illustrate a wide range of opinions and views towards the amount of control press officers have. Dave Arcari states that he maintains little control over the coverage he receives as its "up to the journalist". Rob Saunders expands upon this point by stating that journalists write about something if they believe it to be "good, relevant, or what their readers want". He explains that the press officers extent to controlling coverage as such: "the key is to find the angle to make them believe it is relevant - you put a spin on it". This suggests that a press officer can control their coverage through targeting by manipulating the subject (or style of artist) to suit a specific publication (or individual within that publication). Smith (1993, p.370) adds credence to the concept by explaining that media events have an element of risk attached since "if things go wrong, the press are waiting". Heather Williams outlines the constraints of control methods available, suggesting that she has a decision over

targeting, and the securing of articles (establishing size, position, and date) but not over the actual content of this coverage. She does, however, explain that a method of control regarding interviews is to brief an artist prior to their interview regarding subjects they should avoid (i.e. which would damage their PR campaign or overall image). This is supported by Fairbrother (1993) and also Lathrop and Pettigrew (1999, p.146) who explain that a press officer must ensure “that articles communicate the desired message”. Therefore, briefing an artist prior to interview is a way of manipulating the outcome of such activities to warrant a ‘theme’ for the resulting publicity.

Andrew Preveser acquires a different angle from which to examine the topic of control, by claiming that the amount of control obtained depends on the size (popularity) of the artist. He claims that “big” artists can make demands (such as cover features, choice of photographer, and copy approval), while with “small” artists, the press officer must strike a balance between reaching as many people as possible and risking that some of those people won’t like the artist (and will write about them in a negative fashion). This shows that the amount of control will differ from case to case, and further expands the possibilities for control methods. Andrew Preveser further illustrates his opinion by stating that events outside of the “music arena” are out of control of the press office - such as “tabloid scoops on affairs and drug abuse” - an opinion supported by Smith (1993) who states that unforeseen opportunities and threats can emerge making control over publicity more difficult.

Amanda Williams provides another view on the issue of control by suggesting that a press officer can “lead towards an angle but not dictate what is said”. She acknowledges that this differs for ‘bigger’ artists and also explains that journalists will be more “honest” with their opinions if they trust you. This relates to press relations and demonstrates how important the concept is as a control method. Finally, Amanda Williams discusses that coverage is “random, not like booking an advert where you can say exactly what you want and once you’ve booked it, it’s there”. This illustrates that the press has no commitment to coverage, therefore implying that better quality press relations will aid in control, supported by Oxley (1989).

### ***Copy Approval***

The main issue concerning copy approval centred around Piers Morgan’s (The Mirror) recent ban. Again, opinions differed which illustrates that views will vary from case to case. Heather Williams takes an objective standpoint, stating that the ban on copy approval will “make for more interesting features”. This illustrates how the subject is perceived to be a ‘dumbing down’ of journalism and gives press officers too much control - meaning that journalism simply becomes a marketing tool rather than news. Dave Arcari claims that Morgan’s ban will not affect his business as they “supply facts and information as leads”, from which point onwards it is purely the journalist who decides the content of any coverage. This attitude shows how some PR companies are not concerned with gaining a high amount of control, they are more concerned with acting as an information source rather than a marketer who ‘sells’ the artist to the press. The notion of different ‘types’ of PR is examined closely by Kitchen (1997) who outlines 4 separate PR models depending on what the desired outcome is. Amanda Williams adds credence to this argument by stating that “none of my artists have ever

expected copy approval”, showing that the artists she deals with are not the ‘type’ of artist who would want, need, or be able to make such a demand.

Andrew Preveser takes a standpoint which demonstrates the character of copy approval. He explains that artists who make this demand should be experienced enough to know that if they do not want to take a risk in what’s printed, they shouldn’t do an interview.

Rob Saunders adds a dissimilar view on the matter by suggesting that Morgan’s decision to ban copy approval was “ill advised”. He explains that in the current climate, newspapers need to boost their circulation and “celebrities sell papers”. Since circulation levels are similar (“The Sun and The Mirror have virtually the same readership and circulation”), celebrities can afford to go elsewhere if their demands are not met, without it affecting their PR campaign. This again depends on ‘size’ of artist, as a national newspaper are not going to meet the demands of an artist that their readers do not want to read about - therefore the concept only applies to popular artists. Rob Saunders also illustrates the nature of the industry by saying “papers would never join together and [ban copy approval altogether], such is the rivalry and contempt for each other”. This shows how the threat of a complete ban on copy approval is improbable.

### ***Internet***

The importance of the internet has been highlighted as a tool for public relations through its usage for mass-emailing publications with updates and information regarding artists. It is also, however, an issue for control. Andrew Preveser explains that everyone (press officers and journalists alike) are better informed as a result of online information but it also makes it “difficult to keep anything under wraps”, meaning that it is harder to conceal facts which are not meant to be available for general viewing (from the press, or the public). This point however is conceptualised by Amanda Williams who states that whatever a journalist finds out, they are likely to phone the press office to confirm it before printing anything about it - thereby restating the press officers control. She does however mention that sometimes a call can be received regarding a subject she knows nothing about - information which has not yet reached her by official means (through the record company or artist manager). This adds credence to the point made by Andrew Preveser regarding the concealing of information - that details are available online before they are available officially.

Rob Saunders adds another perspective to the internet’s effect on publicity by elucidating that websites are often the first point of research for a journalist, therefore what is published online is crucial for creating and maintaining perceptions of an artist. He declares that if a journalist has already seen something about an artist, they are more receptive to PR activity relating to that artist. This relates to the argument that PR works in tangent with other marketing functions. Therefore effective, controllable PR is reliant on an overall effective marketing campaign, and the internet is a significant part of this.



## **The Press Perspective - *PR Information***

To analyse the level of control maintained by press officers, it is important to consider a journalist's perception of the information they receive from PR sources. There are a wide range of opinions relating to this topic. Chris Amos highlights the usefulness of PR information as a source to ensure facts are correct. This is a view shared by most of the respondents. For example, Will Kinsman sees press releases as a "quick and easy way of getting information across". Richard Smith explains that press officers vary, as does the usefulness of their information which highlights the fact that control differs from case to case. One of the main points Richard Smith outlines is that of 'panic PR', where a PR source approach specific publications when they don't know who else will cover their client. This adds credence to the importance of targeting as a control factor. It is also possible for journalists to be sent "too much" material from various sources. According to Richard Smith, a journalist in theory should be able to operate without information from PR, as they should be experts in their field.

Although in reality this is not the case, it demonstrates how journalism is seen as a practice which does not require the assistance of PR. This perception will lessen the amount of control PR has over content, as the journalist is in essence restricted to his/her own opinions and fact finding when writing. This is supported by the anonymous respondent, who states that he discards most press releases explaining that "if the record turns out to be any good then I might read the release".

Although the theory of 'non-PR' based writing exists, Peter Robinson points out that some news is entirely written from a press release with some added content from a phone call to the press office (which adds an angle other receivers of the press release won't have).

### ***Process***

There is undoubtedly a decision making process attached to the usage of information from PR sources by journalists. The main point raised in research is that the primary consideration for using material is the readers - will they be interested? Will Kinsman states that the process is entirely "dictated by relevance" and points out that much of the information from PR sources is sent in bulk to all publications, so there is often a lot of irrelevant information at hand. This again illustrates the importance of effective and selective targeting by the press officer. The decision making process is highlighted by Jefkins (1998) who considers how worthwhile information is according to a seven point formula: what is the subject; who are the organisation; where is the location; what are the advantages; what are its uses and who are its users; what are the details; and finally what is the source of the information.

Although none of the respondents highlighted any ethical or political considerations as part of their decision making process, an entirely new perspective was gained when questioning them about being approached to write a specific feature by a Press Officer (a concept related to 'selling in'). Chris Amos reiterates the point that features must be relevant to readers and the tone of the publication, but also explains that he is not interested in simply promoting PR clients. This is supported by Richard Smith, who states "you have to draw the line and realise that you're not just some arm of the PR industry". This point further enforces that there is a divide between PR and Journalism

- that they do not operate to the same agenda. Peter Robinson categorises PR control by explaining that he won't change his mind regarding whether he likes a record or not - therefore implying that PR sources have no influence over his opinion, which is what his writing is based upon. He acknowledges that "PR companies like to do your job for you" in trying to enforce an opinion or angle onto a feature he is writing, which is a method of control.

The anonymous respondent brings up the ethical issue of integrity, claiming that this is what his decisions are based upon. This illustrates that ethical factors impact upon decision making, which are out of PR control. This is a concept supported by communication models acknowledging that 'noise' exists, influencing reception of a message outside of the senders control (Smith, 1998).

### ***PR Relations***

It has already been established how important the PR/Press relationship is perceived to be from the PR perspective. However, these views cannot be upheld unless the reasoning behind the relationships' importance is shared or justified by the press.

Chris Amos illustrates that as PR sources are considered an important contact point, the relationship must be of a good standard in order to obtain extra 'substance' for an article. He also states that "it is always nice socialising with PR people". This implies that he enjoys their company thereby showing that there is not always a rivalry, or tense relationship between PR and the press. Richard Smith adds to the validity of the topic by explaining that press officers will "be much better disposed to someone they know well, who they like, and who they can trust". This comment supports the issues raised from the PR perspective, including that the relationship should be based on trust - for both party's benefit. Will Kinsman further explains this point by stating that only one publication can obtain an 'exclusive', and maintaining a good relationship with press officers will increase chances of being that publication. This shows how journalists might like to retain good relations for their own benefit - while press officers have a different agenda to good relationships - to maintain control. The anonymous respondent states that he has earned many exclusives due to the fact that PR professionals like him. This backs up the notion of the journalist agenda to maintain good relationships for personal and/or professional benefit.

Peter Robinson explores the factor that all circumstances regarding the topic of control (from both a PR and press perspective) vary from case to case. He explains that "with big acts PRs can usually be as difficult as they like because they hold all the cards". This supports the views raised from a PR perspective - that publications need PR sources to supply them with information that will sell the magazine/newspaper. Therefore, if a press officer knows their act is in huge demand by the press, they can afford to forfeit their relationship with journalists (to some extent) as the journalist is in a subordinate position to them.

Another important factor to consider with regards to the press/PR relationship is the political pressure exerted upon magazines by the music industry. The anonymous respondent maintains that the music press must survive not only through circulation levels, but also through advertising revenue - most of which is received from major record labels. Therefore it is natural to assume that in some cases, the publication

editor may feel pressured into including positive coverage of an artist, to maintain their label's interest in paid-for advertising. This has an effect upon control, as the press officer of a label is placed within a position of power over the publication.

### ***Copy Approval***

As copy approval is granted by journalists, it is important to gain a perspective of their views regarding it's ban and how it affects PR. The immediate presumption that can be made from reports of Piers Morgan's recent ban is that in general, journalists don't like granting copy approval - for ethical and creative reasons as discussed by McNair (1996) with the concept of objectivity in journalism. However, Chris Amos illustrates that this is not always necessarily true by stating that he is "happy to go with copy approval if it means [Now UK] can get bigger names". This shows that for some low circulation publications, copy approval is necessary to attract more celebrities to be featured, thereby increasing readership and sales. Richard Smith opposes this stating that Gay Times never grants copy approval. His view is that an artist either offers themselves for interview, or they don't. He also explains that copy approved writing is often bland. Peter Robinson adds to the issue by stating that copy approval is not always necessary, as many pop-stars are "trained" by journalists employed by a record label - about what not to say to the press. It is therefore common for interviewees in popular music to refrain from saying anything "interesting" that may jeopardise their PR campaign. The problem with copy approval, as Peter Robinson implies, is that it is granted prior to an interview taking place - therefore if a 'scandal' arises in the interview, it won't run as copy approval as already been given.

Will Kinsman summarises the issues at hand by explaining that "under certain circumstances, it may only be possible to get an interview if you agree to copy approval", and while the principles of journalism run against it, the aim of journalism is to sell newspapers and magazines. As has already been discussed, celebrities are of public interest and therefore sell copies, meaning that journalists must strike a balance between ethics and commerce when dealing with copy approval requests.

### ***Internet***

It has already been established that the internet is seen not only as a control method, but also a threat to control by press officers. However, it is not viewed in quite the same context by journalists. Richard Smith explains that the internet is useful for background research which Peter Robinson states that without the internet his work "would be less well-informed, less accurate, less colourful and less punctual". This shows that the internet is a vital tool for journalism but is not considered a source of priority information. It can therefore be assumed that PR sources are the most trustworthy, while online sources are used for research and gaining a context within which an article can be written. This is supported by McLuhan (1964) who discusses the concept that a medium conditions the understanding of any message passing through it. As the internet is perceived as an untrustworthy information source, this affects the connotation of messages mediated through it - resulting in journalists checking facts through press officers and restating their control over messages.

## **Conclusion**

### ***PR Tools and Information Usage***

From the findings, it is apparent that PR can be perceived from different angles. While press officers see themselves as part of a marketing department of a record company, 'feeding' information to journalists, the press see PR as an information source available to them for checking facts and gaining new information. The theory behind journalism (based around objectivity and investigative research) dictates that it should work on its own without PR as an essential information source. However, the findings of this research show that in practice this is not the case and journalists, to a certain extent, rely upon PR to add angles to their stories, to confirm facts are correct, and perhaps most importantly allow access to celebrities which help sell their publications.

This shows that while the primary consideration for usage of PR information is the readers interest, there is a reason for the journalist to occasionally become subordinate to the press officer, allowing them control over the journalism process.

### ***The PR/Press Relationship***

The relationship between PR and the press was confirmed by the research to be important to both parties for different reasons. While press officers believe that a better relationship accounts for greater control over their coverage, journalists believe that improving their PR relationship will improve their access to celebrities and exclusive information (which in turn benefit them professionally and benefit the publication through increased sales). The relationship is one which must be based upon trust resulting in honestly written features - therefore, providing that the artist is good quality, press coverage will reflect this accordingly (thereby illustrating that the process has been effectively controlled).

While both parties in the PR/Press relationship feel that it should be of high quality, there is always a hierarchical framework in place dictating that one of those parties will be subordinate to the other. This is a variable factor, and depends on the artist being dealt with. PR for big acts is in more demand by journalists who wish to cover music that is of interest to their readers. In this instance, the press officer has maximum control over the communication process as the journalist is answering to them. Whereas with smaller acts that are of less public interest, the press officer is subordinate to the journalist who does not *need* to cover their artist unless they like it, thereby minimising control.

There is also a political element to the PR/press relationship as certain publications rely upon advertising revenue from major record labels. This grants the press officer more power when dealing with the press, as media buyers in the industry may chose to avoid publications which do not cover their artists in a positive way (or indeed do not cover them at all). Therefore the publication may feel obliged to give coverage to an artist to maintain advertising income.

### ***Targeting***

The findings illustrate that targeting is a method of control not only from a practical perspective (that a press officer controls which publications have certain facts on an artist - the concept of gatekeeping), but also from a social perspective that affects the PR/Press relationship. In essence, ineffective targeting can jeopardise the relationship which affects control over future campaigns.

### ***Copy Approval***

While copy approval is arguably the most brutal form of PR control, its application is only achievable by certain press officers when dealing with artists that are in great demand by the press. While its ban in *The Mirror* may lead to more interesting and objective features (theoretically the essence of journalism), it could also have a negative effect on the newspapers sales, as their competition will still grant copy approval and therefore get more exclusives with the acts that demand it.

While the concept is unethical from a journalists perspective, it is acknowledged that in certain cases it is necessary. This proves that the press agenda setting model is not only based upon ethical and political considerations, but depends also upon newsworthiness through the public-mindset which dictates the decision making process in certain circumstances.

### ***The Internet***

The research was concerned with looking at PR control in its most modern forms. The internet was initially examined with the perception that it was a threat to the management of the communication process. While it is acknowledged that the internet is an important tool making the PR process more efficient, it is also accepted that it makes the concealing of information difficult as everyone has access to it, both for sending and receiving purposes. However, since the internet acts as a method of press research, it can increase journalist receptivity to PR information thereby increasing the effectiveness of publicity.

### ***Factors Within PR Control***

- Gatekeeping - what 'official' facts the journalist is told along with photos and access to interviews.
- Quality of relationship with the press - if this is of an extremely high standard, a journalist may write a feature as a 'favour'.
- Targeting - which publications receive information, and at what time.
- Artist Relations - briefing an artist prior to interviews, extending the function of gatekeeping even further.
- Copy Approval - providing the artist is of sufficient public interest to demand it, features can be checked and amended prior to publication allowing almost total control.
- Political Pressure - being in a position of power by buying advertising space from certain music publications.

### ***Factors Outside of PR Control***

- Events and activities outside of the music arena - harder to control what the artist does outside of releasing records.
- Concealing of information on the internet.
- Press considerations and agenda for writing a piece - the decision making process a journalist goes through when deciding what to write about.
- Ethical and Political constraints placed upon the press - such as the expectation to be objective and the desire to write high-quality features to maintain integrity.

In conclusion, there are many factors which affect the amount of control press officers have over what is printed about their artists. While it is relatively easy to maintain good relationships and ensure that information is digested by journalists, it is difficult to dictate what is actually written due to the very nature of journalism as an impartial and objective profession. Essentially, the reader is the main influence upon what is written in the press - they are the market of the publication and therefore everything in that publication should be of interest to them. If public relations can convince the press that something is of interest to their readers then they maintain maximum control. Where the press know that an artist is of interest, then public relations is already in a position of control by allowing or disallowing access to that artist. Fundamentally, the size of the artist and their public interest dictates how much control there is over publicity whilst the other factors mentioned can help this process.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

While this research highlights many influential factors of control over publicity in the music industry, there were many constraints imposed upon the study which affect its validity. These include: financial and geographical constraints (the research could only be carried out in one country and with limited resources); limited access to the industry (the nature of the music industry dictates that personnel within it are extremely busy and therefore difficult to contact); and limited time to complete research. It is therefore acknowledged that the sample size and industry prominence of the respondents are limited, suggesting that there is a required need for further research which may achieve "literal replication" - retesting of the topics and control methods discussed with a different set of candidates to support the existing findings (Yin, 1994, p.45). Also, since the sample base was selected as a 'purposive' sample, there is an element of bias within the research as each respondent was selected according to their profession. A wider range of respondents, covering a wider range of music genres and corporate strategies could lessen the bias of the research.

Other issues surrounding control over publicity could warrant further research, such as:

- An investigation into legal cases involving press infringement of privacy (such as the recent Naomi Campbell/Mirror case).
- An investigation into 'crisis management' - being specifically concerned with how publicity is controlled as a result of an event or issue, rather than how the communication process is controlled on a day-to-day basis.
- An analysis of the nature of journalism and the various agenda setting models which affect newsworthiness of information.

- How publicity can be effectively managed through the internet, investigating how it is conducted now and how it can be improved upon.
- An analysis of the effects of The Mirror's ban on copy approval - investigating how sales have been affected, both of the newspaper and of celebrities who have not been allowed approval.

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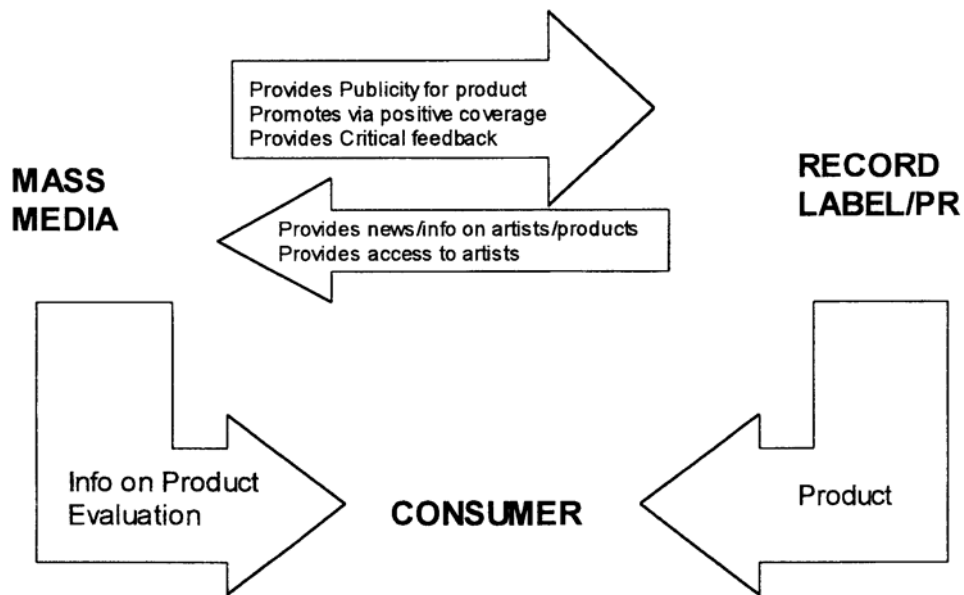
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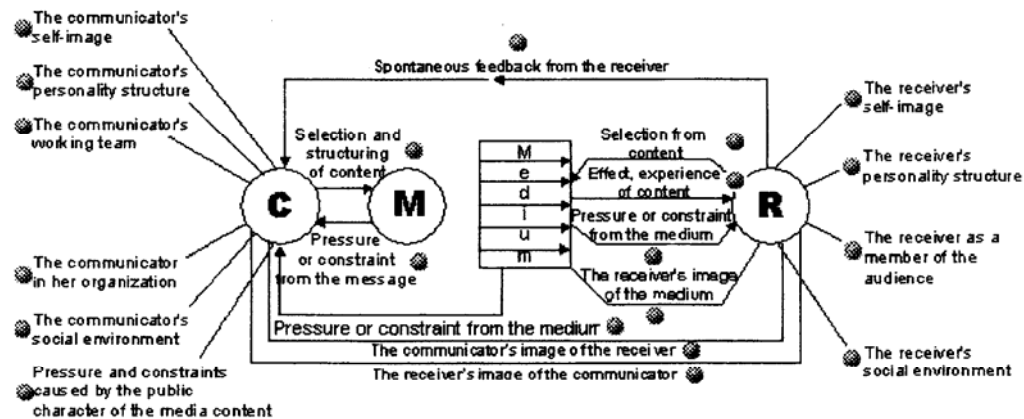
## Appendix 1.1

Interdependent Relationship of the Mass Media and Record Industry. Lathrop and Pettigrew (1999)



## Appendix 1.2

### Maletzke's Model of the Mass Communication Process 1963



Source: <http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/media/maletzke.html>

## Appendix 2.1

### Permission Request Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a 3rd year student on a Music Industry Management and Marketing degree at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University. I am currently embarking on a research project/dissertation on the subject of controlling messages in PR in the music industry. In order to research this topic I am going to interview several Journalists and Editors along with Press officers and PR professionals in order to gain an overall understanding of the topic.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct a short interview to you within the next few weeks. As I am sure you will appreciate, it is not easy to get hold of many people in the Music Industry. If you are able to take part in this research please let me know when, where, and how you would like the interview to take place. Any contribution from yourself will be acknowledged in the thesis and I also plan to send copies of the finished article to everyone who helps me.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. Kind Regards

Jon Bills

## Appendix 2.2

### Interview Structures PR Interview

- 1) Please give some examples of the artists/clients that you are currently working with.
- 2) What tools do you commonly use to inform the press? (For example, Press releases, events etc. )
- 3) What do you consider to be the merits of each of these tools? (Le. why do you use them?).
- 4) When dealing with the press, how important do you consider your relationship with them to be?
- 5) Do you believe this relationship has an impact on the amount or type of coverage you get?
- 6) How important is it to target publicity at the right media/publications? Why? 5) Overall, how much control would you say you have over the coverage you obtain and its content in the press?
- 7) What is your opinion on Piers Morgan's (Editor of The Mirror) recent decision to place a ban on all celebrity copy approval?
- 8) How does this affect your business and how would you react if other papers followed Morgan's example?
- 9) Are there any examples you can give of recent incidents where you have had no control over editorial coverage of one of your artists/clients? (i.e. publicity you did not seek and had to manage as a result).
- 10) Do you believe the internet has any kind of effect on the work that you do? Does information online affect what is communicated to the press?

### Press Interview

- 1) When writing reports and features, how important are press releases and other information from PR sources to you?
- 2) What is your process of dealing with information such as press releases from PR sources? I.e when you receive a press release through the post, what consideration goes into using that information?
- 3) How important would you consider your relationship with Press Officers to be?
- 4) In what circumstances might you need to speak to a press officer? How important is it to be able to get in touch with relevant PR offices?
- 5) If you are approached personally to write a feature on a particular subject by someone in PR, what process do you go through in deciding whether or not to comply with their request? What factors affect your decision?
- 6) What is your opinion on Piers Morgan's (editor of The Mirror) recent ban on celebrity copy approval? Are you in favour of such regulations and would you ever grant copy approval to a publicist? If so, in what circumstances?
- 7) Would you say that the internet has had an effect on the way features and articles are written? If so, how?

## Appendix 2.3 *Participants*

### *PR Professionals*

#### *Name Company Clients*

Rob Saunders	Vital Publicity	Sneaker Pimps, Brian Harvey, Ice T
Karon Maskill	Borkowski PR	Eddie Izzard, Graham Norton
Heather Williams	Sainted PR	Chemical Brothers, Daft Punk, Air
Dave Acari	Buzz Publicity	Radiotones, Tenesee Kait
Andrew Preveser	Andy Preveser PR	Dido, Sheryl Crow, Weezer
Amanda Willams	AW PR	Bloodhound Gand, Him
<i>Name</i>	<i>Publication</i>	<i>Type of Publication</i>
Chris Amos	Now:UK	Lifestyle (music reviews/news)
Richard Smith	Gay Times	'Pink Press' (music reviews/news)
Peter Robinson	NME	Music weekly
Will Kinsman	The Fly	Music monthly (freely distributed)
Anonymous	Freelance	Music weekly and monthly

## Appendix 3.1

### Results Category Descriptions

The interviews conducted with press officers covered the following topics:

- *Tools*: Which PR tools were commonly used along with the merits of each one and why they are used.
- *Press Relations*: The importance of the relationship with journalists and the press in general - and whether this impacts upon the amount and type of coverage obtained.
- *Targeting*: How important it is to target publicity at the 'right' publications and why.
- *Control*: How much control is obtained over the coverage that is obtained and its content in the press.
- *Copy Approval*. Opinions directly related to Piers Morgan's recent ban. How such a ban affects business.
- *Examples*. Any real-life examples of incidents where control over editorial coverage of an artist has been lost and how it was remedied.
- *Internet*: How the internet affects PR processes and what is communicated to the press.

The interviews conducted with journalists covered the following topics:

- *PR Information*: How important PR information sources are when writing reports and features.
- *Process*: The process of dealing with information for PR sources and the consideration that goes into using a piece of information.
- *PR Relations*. The importance of the relationship between journalist and Press officer.
- *PR Communications*: Under what circumstances might a journalist need to speak to a press officer and how important is it to be able to contact them.
- *Decision Making*: If personally approached to write a feature on a specific artist or subject, what process does a journalist go through in deciding whether or not to comply.
- *Copy Approval*. Opinions directly related to Piers Morgan's recent ban. What are the circumstances under which one might grant copy approval.
- *Internet*: How the internet affects the way features are written.

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