**Instructor**

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**Course Description**

Artist and Repertoire (A&R) is an in-depth study of the functions of an A&R professional. Course topics include new artist acquisition including the local music scene, specific A&R approaches for urban, EDM, singer/songwriter, alternative, and indie music, and how to, from an artist’s POV, attract label interest without compromising artistic integrity; A&R participation in record-making; record deals; selecting and working with a producer; working with personal managers and booking agents; A&R involvement in marketing and promotion; A&R sync strategies; paths to A&R career positions; and analysis of how recently signed artists got their first contracts. Finally, this course stresses the collective effort needed from the record label, artist and artist’s team from acquisition to creation and release.

**Course Objectives**

Students will learn how to:

* Assess a recording artists’ potential for success.
* Evaluate a live showcase.
* Critically listen to song demos and give feedback.
* Navigate the complex circumstances that occur when a new artist is presented to a label or music publisher.
* Present themselves and their material to an AR professional.
* Select, hire and direct a producer.

**Course Reading**

Optional materials:

“The Song Machine – Inside the Hit Factory” – John Seabrook

“This Is Your Brain On Music” – Daniel Levitin

“How Music Works” -David Byrne

“The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” -Stephen R. Covey

“All You Need To Know About the Music Business” -Donald Passman

**Grading Summary**

Participation 10%

Assignment 1 5% (Due W-2)

Assignment 2 5% (Due W 4)

Assignment 3 10% (Due W 6)

Assignment 4 10% (Due W 10)

Writing Assignment 1 15% (Due W 12)

Writing Assignment 2 15% (Due W 14)

Final project and presentation 30% (TBA)

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\_index.htmlprovides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Course Topics and Schedule**

Week 1 *Introduction to Artist and Repertoire*

Course introduction

Course objectives

Getting a record or publishing deal

Week 2 *New Talent Acquisition*

What A&R professionals look for

What makes a recording a Hit?

What makes a singer a Star?

How does an act attract and maintain an audience?

Week 3 *Finding New Talent*

Social media

Music blogs

Artist showcases

The local music scene

Week 4 *Showcasing for A&R Executives and Other Music Industry Professionals*

Local showcases

Regional showcases (SXSW, CMJ, etc.)

Music videos

Streaming

The EPK

Week 5 *Breaking into A&R as a career*

Best entry level positions at labels and Publishers

Doing the job independently

Speaking the language

Week 6 *Musical Genres and A&R*

A&R approaches to different musical genres 1

EDM A&R

Singer/songwriter, alternative and indie A&R

Guest Speaker: (TBA)

Week 7 *Musical Genres and A&R*

A&R approaches to different musical genres 2

Urban A&R

Pop A&R

Guest Speaker: (TBA)

Week 8 *Music Publishing A&R*

Songwriters

Bands

Catalogs

When is the right time to sign a publishing deal?

Guest speaker: (TBA)

Week 9 *A&R and Artist Managers*

AR and manager relationship

Working with an artist manager and team

Guest Speaker: (TBA)

Week 10 A&R and Music Producers

Who hires the producer?

Working with and directing a producer

Producer core responsibilities

Proper in-studio etiquette for the A&R Exec

Week 11 A&R and the Marketing team

What is a marketing deck, and what does the A&R exec contribute

A&R/Marketing dual roles

Week 12 Critical Listening and Mentoring

Who are you as an A&R executive?

What are your tastes?

How will your music be perceived?

Week 13 New Artist Signing Case Studies

Signed and dropped, then signed again. How good is the marriage?

Release scheduling in the 21st Century

Prepping in the approach to the starting blocks – how does an artist prepare for the big time?

Week 14 Demo Evaluations I

This is the final exam

Week 15 Demo Evaluations II

This is the final exam

**Assignments**

#1. Via Blackboard or direct email, Send me the title of the song and the name of the artist who performs it that is the most representative of who you are as an A&R rep.  I will bring that song in and we will listen as a class and discuss its merits and place in the market, and also whether or not it’s a ‘hit’ in it’s market/genre. Student’s submissions will be chosen at random and we will play approx. 15 selections in class and discuss.  Your contribution to the discussion will be noted!  Everyone must turn in a song.

#2. For songwriters and artists in the class: Write a "how to" list of 5 steps you can take to get a meeting with an A&R person you'd like the opportunity to meet.

 For those who want to become an A&R executive: Write a "how to" list of 5 steps you can take to *become* an A&R person at a major or independent label or publishing company.

#3. Bring in a song that's reached the top 5 on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart that you *don't* particularly like, and write 2 paragraphs. Paragraph 1: Why you don't think it deserved it's chart position.  Paragraph 2: Why it did!

#4. Attend a pop music show, preferably at, but not limited to, an on-campus venue and write an A&R scouting report. The report should include brief reviews on the songs that were performed (at least 5), the quality of the performances, and the degree of “star quality” present on stage. Finally a judgment on whether or not the artist should:

* Be signed to the label you work for
* Be given a development deal by the label you work for
* Not yet ready for consideration by your label

#5. Write a paper that seeks to answer the following questions:

* How important are mixtapes?
* R&B: how has that genre survived and changed? Is it viable today?
* What outlets are available to Urban artists to hone their live performances and build a following?
* Urban music is easier to cross to pop, and is the most popular genre of this era, T or F?

#6. Write a paper that seeks to answer the following questions:

* What are the differences between doing A&R for a Publisher as opposed to doing the same job for a Record Label?
* When is the right time to sign a publishing deal?
* What is the range of compensation for publishing deals for new songwriters?
* What are the deal points covered in a publishing deal?
* Whose responsibility is it to procure a pub deal for a signed artist?