

*“A peek into success...”*

# So how did **THEY** get their record deal?

*A light-hearted look into how some  
bands have secured their record deals  
in the past.*

Feel free to give away this short eBook to your  
friends and colleagues!

# Introduction

## Important info

- This short eBook is designed to be a light-hearted look into how some bands have secured their record deals in the past.
- If you're looking for a record deal, you can find out which record labels are currently looking to sign new artists at [www.audiorokit.co.uk](http://www.audiorokit.co.uk)
- Feel free to give this e-book to friends, customers and colleagues.
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# 1: Rapper ‘Bangs’ Shock Record Deal.

## “Worst” rap video on youtube.com gets signed!



Sudanese-Australian rapper Bangs announced that he scored a record deal in 2010 with HSM Distribution. So what’s so special about that I hear you ask!

It’s the fact that fans widely considered his song [“Take You To The Movies”](#) as one of the worst rap videos of all time.

Yet, despite the fact that most people find this video to be nothing more than a joke, Bangs’ has notched up an incredible 2.7 million views on youtube.com since last June.

According to an official press release, Bangs becomes the flagship artist for this emerging distribution and entertainment label, proving that whether an artist is good or bad, sometimes it’s just the marketing that counts in the music industry!

## 2: Simply Red Turned A&R Away!

**Simply Red, the multi-platinum act came up with a very novel way to create a buzz in the early days...**



The incredible story of how they got signed goes like this; After booking a very swanky rehearsal space, they sent out invites to as many A&R, managers and promoters as they could, inviting them to their showcase.

With so many bands now-a-days doing exactly the same thing you would be forgiven for thinking this is falling short of an 'incredible' story .. but it's what happened next that set Simply Red apart from other bands of the day.

They asked a doorman to turn away every single A&R, manager and promoter who attended their showcase, saying that the 'event' was full and no more space was available! You can image the music reps reaction, a combination of anger, frustration and a massive dose of curiosity about this mystery band that everyone else was apparently listening to!

Over the last 25 years Simply Red have sold 50 million records which shows that they had more than just front and marketing savvy.

### 3: Beat 'Em At Their Own Game!

**Rapper Slim Thug went platinum, made a million dollars and had an army of loyal fans .. oh, and that was before he even landed a recording contract!**



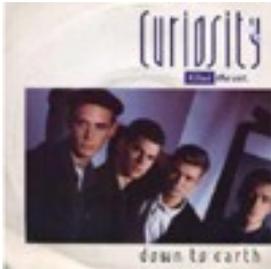
Slim Thug sold his album in H-Town, USA, selling direct to the market with no middlemen and promoting it himself independently.

If you sell a 100,000 Units for \$10 you have £1m right there. Add to that the live shows and any merchandise and you can see how it is possible. But, that's not to say it is easy, 100,000 units with no advertising is no small feat!

Slim Thug obviously had a keen business mind when starting out, he owned businesses including a barbershop and a clothes shop. This kind of entrepreneurship saw him generate a staggering number of sales with no record label backing showing that anything is possible with determination and focus.

## 4: Hello? Anyone There?

**Late 80's band "Curiosity Killed the Cat" put their auditioning on autopilot, using an answering machine!**



We have heard this story several times before and love it. Their hit song, 'Name and Number' was originally recorded acapella onto a home answering machine.

All the boys needed to do then was get record labels to call them at home and simply let their pre recorded message do the talking for them. "Hello? hello? ... Hey how you doin, I'm sorry you couldn't get through, coz this is a message that's been recorded, especially for you .."!

With such a catchy tune who could resist!

Despite us wanting this to be true, we are skeptical as the song 'Name and Number' was released almost three years after their first album - and who in their right mind would push that song back till the second album!

Oh, by the way, that "Hey How You Doin" refrain would find itself in the Top Ten two years later as part of the De La Soul song "Ring Ring Ring (Hey Hey Hey)".

## 5: Focusing On Just One A&R

### Focusing on one A&R instead of many ...



We have been told not to name names with this one! A 25 year old singer set his sights on a high profile A&R, and decided to write and pitch his material only to that A&R, making countless changes to please the A&R reps wishes.

He never once contacted other A&R or submitted material elsewhere, choosing instead to build a relationship with one person.

In fact this technique works very well for songwriters who usually have two basic options, either write and pitch songs out to as many people as possible, or focus in on one project and specialize.

Needless to say that after no less than 82 submissions to this one A&R man, he secured a deal! We must stress that the A&R person requested changes to songs and kept an active interest in this person, you should never spam A&R or they will totally cut you off, and potentially tell other music reps also.

## 6: Timing + Talent + Being Ready

**It's hard to imagine a super star like Ne-Yo finding it hard to get his music out, but it wasn't always plain sailing**



Being such a gifted song writer, it's not surprising that Ne-Yo found a record deal easily, writing songs for artists such as Mary J. Blige, Chris Brown, B2K, Musiq, and Mario, but as a singer it wasn't so easy...

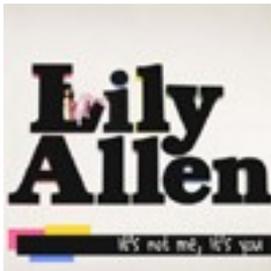
His record label, Columbia kept pushing back his album on the release calendar until it was eventually permanently shelved. After years of frustration Ne-Yo felt that maybe he was not meant to be a singer and considered quitting it all and focus on writing only.

Incidentally, did you know that Columbia also dropped 50 Cent and Alicia Keys, Doh!

So how did Ne-Yo land his deal as a singer? He accompanied a friend to the Def Jam offices, not to shop music, or to ask for a record deal, but simply because a friend of his wanted to see someone he knew who worked there. By the time he left the building, Ne-Yo had a record deal - this was five years after signing originally with Columbia!

## 7: Make Use Of A Viral Avalanche!

**Lily Allen, as well as several other high profile acts have been savvy enough to notice the trend in myspace backgrounds, and all the teens who use them**



In 2007, a girl called Ashley Qualls was just 17 years old and had a website called [whateverlife.com](http://whateverlife.com), with the sole purpose of providing myspace backgrounds to teens.

Now as we know, marketing is everything in music, and [whateverlife.com](http://whateverlife.com) was getting a staggering 7 million views a month. Teaming up with this website meant that Lily Allen could expose her music to an enormous fan base of teens, which she did, and it worked!

Marketing manager for Jonas Brothers also used [Whateverlife](http://whateverlife.com) to launch the band, using a new video widget. They had 60,000 downloads of the Jonas Brothers' three-part video in less than two months.

The viral campaign encouraged fans to vote for the band on MTV's *Total Request Live*, and the group's song "Mandy" hit No. 4 - with zero radio play. Unbelievable!

## 8: Give Your Music Away

**Contrary to popular belief, the Arctic Monkeys did not create a Myspace page that became famous ... the fans created it without them knowing!**



They played their first gig on 13 June 2003 at *The Grapes* in Sheffield city-centre, and would give away their CD so that people knew the lyrics at future gigs.

The CDs were promptly file-shared amongst fans and a viral fan base grew. Their famous Myspace notoriety came from fans creating a profile of the band, which grew from its own hype and eventually they were snapped up.

Their debut album *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, released in early 2006, became the fastest-selling debut album in British music history.

## 9: Choose Your Manager Carefully

**In 2007 a UK based Rock band sat down to discuss their future after the bass player announced he would be quitting the band. They had been gigging for almost 10 years and needed to change.**

Deciding to follow a new dance sound, the rock band reformed and created heavy dance tracks with a complete new line up.



Many bands have done this, trying to 'fit into' a mould can work, but this band had a winning card up their sleeve. They didn't approach the typical music manager or record label A&R, instead they searched for a minor music celebrity from years past.

They found little know music producer called D. Williams who had produced a number of hits in the early 80's and was now a dance music DJ. This was in every sense a great idea as having a manager who has friends who are perhaps older and in more senior positions in the music industry would bring certain benefits, plus he was a DJ and still active in the industry.

It seems that 20 years outside the mainstream pop world was just enough time for Williams to rekindle his passion for breaking new acts because just two weeks after signing the band they were snapped up by a major. This illustrates the importance of having a well connected manager who knows the industry and how it works.

## 10: A gig, a beer and a deal - easy!

**Alan McGee, boss of now defunct Creation Records discovered Oasis in a club called King Tut's Wah Wah Hut in Glasgow, Scotland.**



The unique thing about this discovery is the fact that McGee offered the boys a recording contract on the spot! After hearing just three songs, McGee walked up to the band and asked them, “Do you want a record deal?” This shows how anything is possible in the music businesses, and stories like this are what make the music industry so exciting.

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