

BUILDING YOUR CAREER

Take Charge of Your Trajectory

MC: Frankie Anderson-Byrne (Associate Editor, Beat Magazine)

Panellists: Jackson Phelan (RAT!hammock / Planet Pain), Juliette Lallo (Shows By Jet), April Terzis (Collective Artists / Overpass)

Overview

The second panel of Soundcheck shifted the focus from branding to the practical mechanics of building a music career: booking gigs, engaging with media, diversifying income, and managing the mental load of being both the talent and the business.

The conversation was grounded in real experience from both sides of the industry - artist and booker, performer and journalist - delivering a clear message: community is your currency, and putting yourself out there is the only way forward.





KEY DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. THE DIY MINDSET: WHERE TO START

Jackson Phelan identified the single most important trait for a DIY artist: "An attitude of completed is better than perfect. And just the agency to actually do tasks yourself." He stressed that the pressure to make everything perfect -- whether it's a TikTok post or a demo -- can be paralyzing. "What is the bare minimum to actually complete this task?" is a more useful question than "Is this good enough?"

Juliette emphasised community immersion: "Going to lots of gigs. When I was starting out, I went to like four gigs a week and met lots of people." She highlighted the story of an artist called Billiam, who started attending all-ages shows at 16 in school uniform: "A couple of years later, they're 21, playing Meredith. They really gave a lot to the community and the community gave back."

April Terzis gave practical advice for emerging artists: "Write a bunch of songs. Find your sound. If you want to get into playing shows, play a bunch of shows -- anything you can to get used to being in front of an audience, to get used to sound checking, to get used to being among other artists and peers."

2. BOOKING LIVE GIGS WITHOUT A BOOKING AGENT

The panel offered detailed guidance on self-booking:

Have a strong pitch. April: "Have a really good, succinct pitch. I personally find having that in the body of an email rather than an attachment is really much more easily digestible. Have hyperlinks so someone can look at your Instagram, your streaming services."

Include live footage. April: "If you have any live video footage, have a link to that. If you don't, capture content of your live performance so people have a bit of an idea what to expect."

Reach out for support slots. April: "Reaching out for the support spot is such a nice way to get your foot in the door, meet other artist peers, get a show, get a couple hundred bucks, and see what it's like to play to an audience that maybe isn't your own."

Think about community, not just sound. Juliette: "I had a template email that I would send back to people, and most of the questions were about community -- what are some bands that you like? What bands would you like to play with? Ultimately the venue wants to know there will be some people there."



Build the gig you want to see. Jackson shared how Rat Hammock's first gig was a self-booked residency called "Song Circle Tuesdays" -- house shows with rotating lineups:

"Every week we'd go to someone else's house. A bunch of different people would come. And then the final show was at the Grace Darling. It meant we built some traction before we booked our own show."

3. STANDING OUT: THE ART OF THE MEMORABLE SET

Jackson provided some of the panel's most colourful advice on differentiation:

- The Rat Hammock theme song: "We literally started every show with this ten-second theme. Sometimes people throughout the crowd would be yelling out for it. We'd play it seven or eight times throughout the set."
- The blender incident: "We brought a blender on stage for the set. Didn't mention it. In the very last song, we made a smoothie on stage with a microphone set up through delay pedals and used the blender sounds for the big rock-out noise moment."

His point: "Finding something that you're into that can be a bit unique to you -- whether that's set dress, bringing stuff to put on stage, or whatever."

Frankie Anderson-Byrne confirmed from the media perspective: "As media, that is what we look for for a good story. It's authentic and it's unique. And it's something that makes you stand out."

4. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY RADIO AND LOCAL MEDIA

Juliette: "Listen to community radio, find your favourite shows, and support those by becoming a subscriber. Comment in and create relationships with presenters. They'll start to understand who you are."

Jackson: "Community radio people -- they're at the shows of the people that they're playing on the station. So listening to the station, seeing what they play, and going to the shows and doing that same community building."

April: "I also think inviting these people to your shows, offering them a guest list spot, is really important. Live is the biggest way to gain and retain fans of your entire discography."

Frankie added the media perspective: "Having all of your assets already there for us to look through is so important. Having footage, having images -- it doesn't even have to be press shots that are professionally done. Standing out and having a story is so important."



Critical actionable item from Juliette: "If you are going to release music, upload your release to Triple J Unearthed and upload your release to AMRAP, which is where a lot of people in community radio find music."

5. DIVERSIFYING YOUR INCOME

The panel was emphatic that almost nobody in the music industry has just one job:

- Music education & songwriting mentorship -- Jackson developed this from his personal practice and now works for APRA AMCOS' Song Makers program
- Production work -- "I never considered myself a music producer, but slowly sticking it out and getting better, I've done production work for other people and worked on podcasts"
- Session and touring musician work
- Guest lecturing at JMC, Collarts, and other institutions
- Graphic design for other artists' projects
- Writing bios and press releases for other musicians
- Sync and corporate events -- April: "Be pitching to independent sync agents with your songs for placement on advertisements, television. That can be a really good chunk of money for something that's already existing."
- Instrumental teaching -- Jackson: "People go to lessons most of the time for guidance and to feel good. You might be much more equipped than you think to teach."
- Tour management -- skills learned from DIY touring can become paid work for other artists
- Event planning -- Juliette: "I'm planning my friend's wedding. This is the thing that came through events and music."

April summarised: "I think it's extremely rare for anyone in the music industry to have one job. Most people I know have two to three to sometimes even five jobs."

6. MANAGING THE MENTAL LOAD

Jackson on dividing roles in a band: "I handled a lot of the emails and managerial roles. Our drummer, Jack, who was quite frugal, took care of the finances. Tom, our guitar player, would handle merchandise and practical things."

For solo artists: "It's just being insanely organised and compartmentalising things. Put an hour aside for admin. On Wednesdays, I do two hours of creative work."

His social media survival tip: "Post and ghost. If you're an artist, it can be so stressful to put a social media post up. So just do it and then lock your phone and go, 'I'm not going to look at how that went.'"



AUDIENCE Q&A HIGHLIGHTS

Q: How do you find musicians to collaborate with?

Jackson: "Go to gigs of music that you like. You're naturally going to connect with people that share an interest. Your taste is the most important tool that we have. Just talk about music you love."

April: "Use your network. If you're in a music class at school, ask if someone wants to jam. Even if there's just a couple of you, that's a start."

Juliette: "Being here is probably the first step. I'm sure there's lots of people in this room looking for people to jam with."

Q: What if I want to explore multiple genres?

April: "You can have another project. Mika James is alt-folk but also the drummer in The Vovos, a punk band. Lineups are becoming more cross-genre. You also won't find your sound right away -- it takes time and trying different stuff."



ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE IMMEDIATELY

1. Go to 2-4 gigs a week. Meet people. Talk to bands after their sets. Tell them you liked their music. Ask about supporting.
2. Write a pitch email. Include: who you are, your story, hyperlinks to music and socials, live footage if available, and some community context (bands you like, bands you'd play with).
3. Upload to Triple J Unearthed and AMRAP every time you release music.
4. Book your own show. House shows, open mics, residencies create the gig you want to see. Don't wait for someone to book you.
5. Develop a memorable live element. A theme song, a visual element, something unexpected that becomes your calling card.
6. Reach out for support slots on headline shows by artists you admire. Follow the web: check who supports them, then check who supports those artists.
7. Listen to community radio actively. Subscribe, comment, engage with presenters. Invite radio people to your shows.
8. Prepare a press kit with photos, bio, links, and footage - even if it's DIY. Have it ready so you can respond immediately to opportunities.
9. Identify transferable skills (design, writing, production, teaching, event planning) and offer them to peers for small fees to diversify income.
10. Post and ghost. Don't let social media anxiety derail your day. Post it, lock the phone, move on.



PANELLIST'S CORE MESSAGE

Jackson Phelan

Completed is better than perfect. Create memorable live experiences. Develop transferable skills. Post and ghost.

Juliette Lallo

Community is everything. Go to gigs relentlessly. Upload to Uearthed and AMRAP. Build relationships with radio presenters.

April Terzis

Have a killer pitch. Chase support slots. Diversify income through sync, teaching, session work. Don't put yourself in a genre box.

Frankie Anderson-Byrne

Have your assets ready. A good story is what media looks for. Be authentic and unique. |



STAY IN TOUCH

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