

YOU DON'T NEED A TOUR MANAGER; YOU NEED A SOUND TECHNICIAN!

You start a band, practice your pants off, and at some point, you feel ready to go out and play for a real-life audience. Chances are the concert venues, and festivals aren't quite queuing up to let you play yet, so your first gig will probably be in your local pub for a crowd consisting of 30 of your best mates and some slightly indifferent regulars. It's a perfectly fine place to start. Nobody likes playing to an empty room, so it's always better to play in a crammed bar filled with familiar faces, than having to confront a giant empty hall. And of course, it's not about the money, it's about gaining experience and having a few strangers coincidentally walking in who you'll turn into loyal fans before the night ends. Do you need a tour manager, roadies and five technicians for that? Certainly not.

by DENNIS KOSTER

Even if you play in the least experienced band ever, you probably know how to plug in a guitar. Otherwise, you will learn soon enough after a few gigs. But isn't it practical to have someone with you who takes care of all other things for you? Someone who lets the stage manager know you're there, and who asks for more beer when you run out. If you happen to have a friend who would love to take on such tasks, you can make that person your official tour manager. As long as it doesn't cost you any money. Moreover, you can assume that if you like the spotlights, you should have at least one band member who is socially equipped enough to take the lead when you arrive at a venue. Save money and take care of business yourself. That way you can put all your earnings into the band's piggy bank. After all, your first record, your first band bus, your backline and instruments all have to be paid for, and why would you give your hard-earned money to someone who takes care of stuff that you can do perfectly well yourself?

Cutting costs

Misunderstandings can easily be avoided if you communicate well with venues and festivals. A thorough preparation is really half the work, and you can do that yourself for a long time after you've started your band. There are more ways to save money once you get some more gigs. If you tour with a band as a support act, you can politely ask to use their backline. This

would mean you could usually get all your own gear crammed into one car, keeping your travel costs to a minimum.

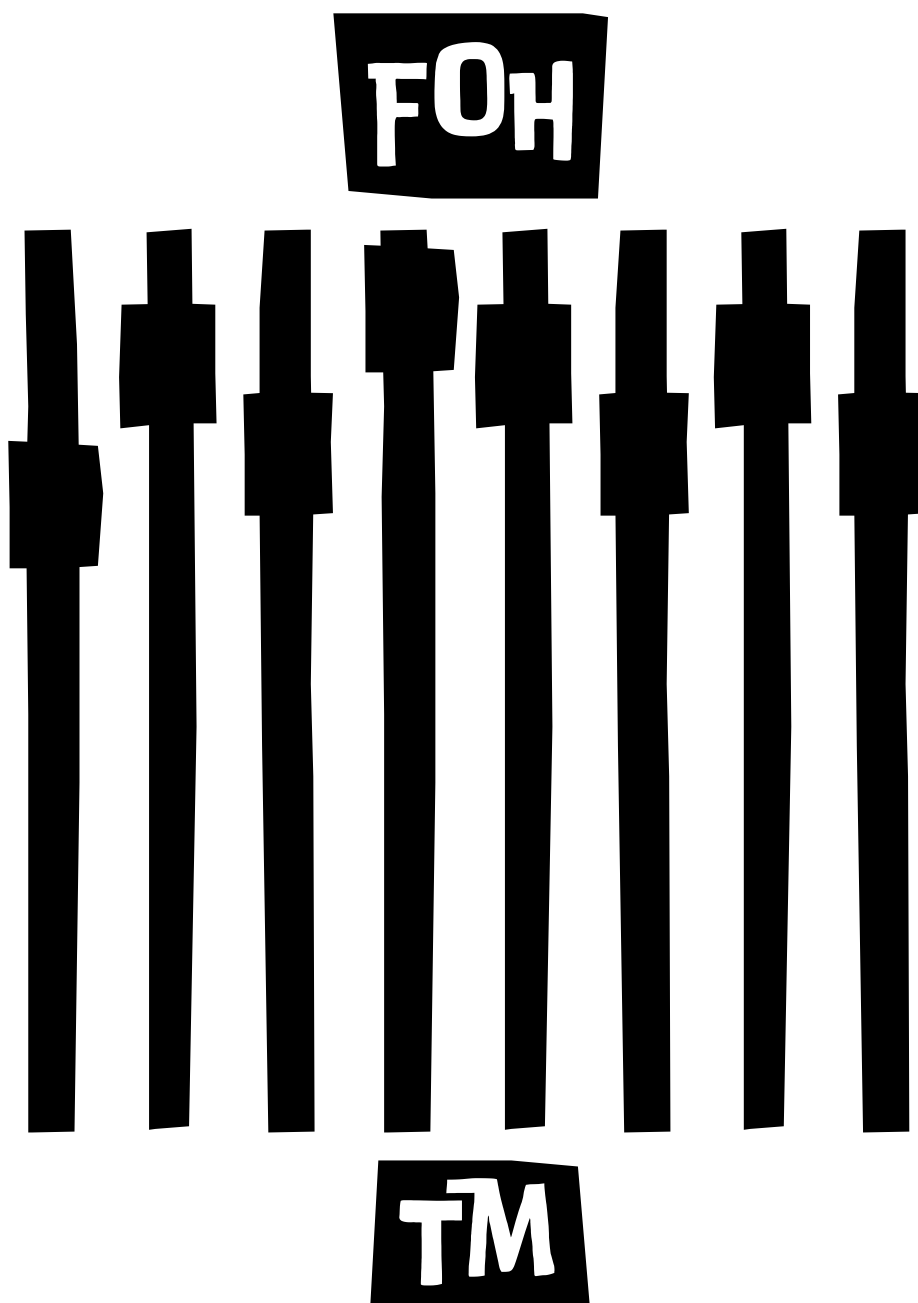
It is very tempting to have an elaborate hospitality rider. Gray Goose vodka, a bottle of tequila, three types of beer from three different continents and local farmer's yogurt. As a new and unknown band, you could demand it all, the chances of actually getting all those things, however, are very slim. And if they do provide you with all the goodies, you almost always indirectly pay for it yourself. The costs you incur, including your hospitality rider, are simply deducted from your fee. If you are saving up to take the next step in your career, then you better settle for a case of beer, M&Ms (any colour) and some bottles of pop.

Investments

If you've put aside all your hard-earned money, and you are gradually getting more and more gigs abroad, a band bus might be a good investment. Especially if you're planning on touring with your own backline. Just a modest van that exactly fits all band members, instruments, and luggage would be perfectly fine. For many aspiring musicians, the ultimate rock 'n' roll dream is going on tour in a night liner, but that's really only for the bigger acts. You can easily spend € 2,500 per day on such a luxury sleeper coach, so you'd have to get hefty wages night after night to make it feasible. Take comfort in the fact that a night liner is often far from practical. Not every music venue has the facilities to accommodate them, and when you'd try to reach a concert hall in an old city centre, you would spend hours nervously navigating narrow streets. And sometimes those streets are even completely inaccessible for such a huge motor vehicle. Then, you would find yourself hauling your gear into a smaller van somewhere on a remote parking lot. Trust me, as long as you're not selling out stadiums yet, you can easily do without a night liner.

Your first official crew member

You can only spend your money once, and at the end of the day, your music is the most important thing. That's why a sound engineer should probably be your first official crew member. At many venues and festivals, you'll find greatly skilled technicians, but at some point, you simply want to sound exactly as you once envisioned when you were recording your songs. That can entail all sorts of things. For example, it is crucial to your songs that the bass is turned up louder in the mix. Or you might perform better with a specific monitor sound. Once you're playing, you can't keep everything in check and it may very well be possible that your songs



sound amazing on stage, but after the gig you find out that front stage you sounded like one big mess. The crowd will have no idea what kind of music you just played, and the entire show was basically a waste of effort. How great would it be to always have your own sound engineer present who knows how to get things exactly right for you? Someone who ensures that your sound check runs smoothly and that the crowd hears your songs exactly as you mapped it out

in the studio. Of all the investments you make, having your own sound engineer is the one that contributes to your success in the most direct way.

From that first success you can continue to grow, and before you know it, you have recorded three albums and a renowned booking agent is sending you on tours both nationally and abroad. And then, you will finally travel in a night liner easily paid for with the stacks of

merchandise you sell every night. And when the moment arrives that you're barely able to cross the street without being jumped by hysterically screaming fans, don't forget that you once really enjoyed playing for 30 people in your local pub, in exchange for merely a case of beer. Keep both feet on the ground, because success is often momentary. You'll always want to keep the option open to knock on the door of your local pub and ask to play there again. 🍷