LONG WAY TO THE TOP

The Role of Music Booking Agents in Finland

CAROLIN BÜTTNER

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TAMPEREEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
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The digitalization of mankind in the past years has also affected the music business in an extreme way. Turning from the age of record sales into the age of digital music streaming, the live music sector and its components have became an essential part of today’s music market. The primary aim of this thesis was to gather information about the role of music booking agents in the present-day music industry while focusing on the Finnish music business.

A comprehensive research of specialist books and business related web sources gave an interesting insight into the topic of music booking agents and agencies. A wider perspective on the importance, responsibilities and activity of an agent in was gained by referring to 7 expert interviews, which were conducted with the veterans and newcomers in the Finnish music business.

The majority of the interviewees as well as the literature stated that the booking agent plays a crucial role in the development of an artist’s career. Together with the management and record label, the agent takes care of business related matters and gives the artist the possibility to focus on his main responsibility: the creation of music.

While drastic changes in the economics constantly affect the booking agent’s working environment, his tasks still require to the same working methods and will probably not be changing in the future.

Key words: booking agent, music industry, live music
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1 INTRODUCTION

Since I was a kid, music has always been a huge part of my life. As a child I secretly took my parents CD’s out of the shelf, played them on the recorder and jumped through the living room with a hairbrush in my hand pretending it was a microphone. When I grew older my dad introduced me to hard rock music while playing KISS and Bon Jovi records to me before he took me to an AC/DC live show when I was 11 years old. That day I sold my soul to Rock’n’Roll.

Instead of spending my free time with schoolmates at discos and parties, I was busy discovering new bands and artists. In my teenage years I stumbled over a Finnish band called HIM, which introduced me to the Finnish music scene. At the age of 18 I travelled to Finland for the first time, fell immediately in love with the country and the rest of the story is history.

Within my study time at the Tampere University of Applied Sciences I focused on event production and management and was even able to establish my school project “Kiira-rock” as a yearly small event in Tampere. My internship at NEM Agency – which later turned into a part time job – introduced me to the hard work of a music booking agency. With getting singer-songwriter Matthau Mikojan on board, my journey in the world of gig bookings, agents, promoters and venues began. I am working as a booking agent for already one year now; a time which taught me a lot about the Finnish music industry as well as the people working in there. A time which taught me that the role of a music booking agent is in nowadays music business by all means more important than ever before.

With this thesis I would like to introduce the reader to my world, my passion and my favourite job ever: being a booking agent in today’s music industry. I will expand on today’s importance of the live music business sector and consider corner marks such as the role of the agent in the industry, the importance of the agent for the artist’s career, the agent’s responsibilities or requirements for booking a new artist. But above all I will project the theory onto real life. I am going to pore over booking agents and agencies in Finland, talk to business veterans and newcomers to figure out the agent’s importance in the Finnish live music sector these days. I will gather the agents’ experiences and pro-
ject the artists’ view on important criteria for choosing a booking agent and agency while pointing out how essential the cooperation with an agent is for the artist’s career and what kind of agency is the most likely candidate: major or independent.
2 MUSIC BUSINESS

2.1 The Music Business in General

The music business - or better known as the music industry - involves production, distribution and sale of music. Another essential part is the promotion of live music and live music performances. (Miller, 2003)

The music industry and live music business contain a wide range of professions such as songwriters, musicians, singers, publishers, producers, booking agents, promoters, managers, radio hosts, music journalists or music teachers. Due to the development of the music business, this list is constantly changing and growing. According to Lyng (2002, 15), the first steps in the music business are the most important ones for young musicians. Even if the business part is by many musicians considered as uninteresting, it is inevitable for a professional career. A profitable vocation in the music industry requires good selling records, successful touring and good artist promotion. (Lyng 2002, 15.)

2.1.1 Copyright, Publishing and Record Deals

But before the artist dives into the world of success, he needs to create music. Creating and writing music will lead him into the tricky field of copyright, publishing and record deals. According to Passmann (2015, 225), the purpose of copyrights “is to promote the progress of “useful arts” by giving creators exclusive rights to their works for a while.” The idea of copyrights is simple: if the artist creates something, he will get the right for getting paid if someone else will use his work. Copyrightable are only original works, which means that the work has to be first made by the artist and not stolen by something else. The definition of “copyrightable” is pretty contradictory and based on the case-by-case situation. While sometimes five notes are defined as copyrightable, another case requires a whole song. If an artist creates something tangible it can get a copyright. Tangible is the definition for something touchable, which would be a written down music track or a song sung to the recorder in the music industry. (Passmann 2015, 225-226.)
After the music is created a publisher might step into the artist’s business. The main task of a publisher is getting people to use the artist’s song. Therefore the artist assigns the copyright to the publisher and the publisher gives clients licenses. As the clients pay to use the artist’s song, the income gets shared between him and the publisher. While the share in the United States of America is equally 50/50, the percentages differ in other countries. (Passmann 2015, 235-236.)

With the published music the artist automatically gets mechanical and performance royalties for his composition. Mechanical royalties enable the artists to earn money whenever his song is reproduced on Vinyl, CD or the like, while performance royalties guarantee him income every time his composition is performed publicly on the radio, TV, streaming services or at a live venue. (Music Publishing 101, n.d.)

Another possibility of getting the artist’s music released is the record deal. This can happen via a major record label or an independent record label. Both have the same tasks but differ in their company size and the amount of resources they can work with. Major labels employ much more people than independent labels. They have mostly a good financial basement for the manufacturing of the artist’s work but can also limit the artist’s creative freedom. The independent label is truly smaller and can only work with small resources but usually does not give any huge creative limits. Anyhow both – major and independent – have the task to pay the fabrication of the artist’s record (including studio time, producer, engineer etc.), find a suitable producer for the record, marketing the record release (includes press, TV and radio) and taking care of the distribution of the record. (Condron, 2014)

2.1.2 The Music Business: Now and Then

Music has always been an important part of the mankind. Over time it has just changed its appearance. While in the mid-nineteenth century sheet music was the primary product of the music industry, phonograph discs have been popular in the 20th century (Grevener, 2016). Before the era of singer-songwriter and recorded music conquered the industry, publishing has been the main core of the music business. Writers gave their music to publishers who again sold the musical material to performers. Afterwards the publisher paid the writer a small sum of the earned money, the so called the royalty
payment. Successful writers were lucky to get signed by publishers. Regularly delivering new musical material to the publisher meant a regularly small income for the writer. With the upcoming popularity of singer-songwriters, publishers lost their power in the music business. Artists proved that they were able to deliver own material and thus record companies decided to take over also the publishing part. (Barrow & Newby 2003)

With the invention of Rock’n’Roll in 1950, the music industry slowly turned into the modern technology and mass marketing which we know today: Record companies dominated the music market; recorded music got promoted and distributed to the public (Frascogna & Hetherington 2004, 2.). This crossover of black and white musical traditions established not only a new music style but also a rebellious youth movement. Elvis Presley became the idol of a whole generation and the combination of Blues, Country, Gospel and Pop conquered Jukeboxes all over the world (Newfield, 2004).

By then singles have been the main product of the music market. When the record companies recognized that people would even buy a whole album to listen to a single, the LP gained popularity. Years after this technological development the music industry started to compress the size of recordings and thus cassettes entered the music market before CD’s were acclaimed as the medium of recorded music in the 1990s. (The History of Sound… n.d.)

With the digitalization in the 21st century the music business changed a lot; and still does. Downloading services such as iTunes made the record sales drop. In 2015 the CD sales have been less than 25%. Even if the popularity of LP’s and vinyls (picture 1) is growing again, streaming services such as Spotify control the music market and make the music business constantly bigger and bigger. (Passman 2015, Introduction.)
PICTURE 1. Vinyl Disc of the Finnish Band “Tryer” (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
3  LIVE MUSIC BUSINESS

3.1  The Live Music Business in General

The live music business is a fusion of components such as artist, artist manager, live music venue, booking agent, promoter and fans. It is focused on live performances in clubs, festivals or touring and is a multinational industry, which employs hundreds of people all over the world (About the Live Music…, n.d.). The live music business offers a lot of possibilities of freelancing jobs. A permanent employment is more significant when it comes to the venue maintenance and management as well as festival organization. (Rutter 2011, 40.)

Especially in the past years the importance of the live music industry increased rapidly. While the breakthrough of new artists back then mostly happened because record companies were pushing the artist via radio and TV, festival or support slots took over this task most recently. But still today the recorded music industry is serving the live music industry and vice versa. While a consumer hears an artist’s song on the radio, he might spend money to see the artist live and the other way around: while the artist performs live, the consumer might buy the record. (Rutter 2011, 112.)

3.1.1  The Importance of the Live Music Business in the 21st century

Live music gives the artists a chance to perform music to their potential fans and purchasers. Playing live is an essential part for the musician to build up an image and a name in the music business. (Shuker 2012, 49.)

But not only the artist profits from the live music business. According to Sharkey (2006), live shows and live music are also an important factor for the concert venue as they will get the audience to an area where they probably would not have gone before. He is pointing out that even not only the venue profits from those visitors – also local bars, surrounding restaurants and shops would do. In Sharkey’s opinion live music is not only a matter about how much a fan pays for seeing an artist, it is also an important economic factor for the area and city.
Especially in the past years live shows got more and more important in the music industry and the live music business is changing enormously. While the sales of records dropping, live shows and touring became the main income source for an artist in the 21st century (About the Live Music..., n.d.). Referring to Rutter (2011, 43), “concert promoters that stage good quality events find little trouble in selling tickets, as consumer values shifts from the recorded product to the live performance.”

3.2 Live Performances

One of the most remunerative aspects of an artist is his personal appearance. It is an important tool for boosting the record sales and getting more attention by the media. Impressing an audience can also be a significant aspect while dealing with record labels, booking agents or promoters. Having a big consuming fan base makes it easier for business professionals to evaluate an artist’s value in the music market. Artists who consistently sell records are the ones who are continually on tour. This helps them to build up a strong fan base and outlast their record career. Even if touring costs have been rising in the past years, creating a strong personal appearance is inevitable of a musician’s career in today’s music business. A well-produced, terrific and protruding stage performance (picture 2) gives the fan a unique experience, which causes excitement and the will to attend future live shows of the artist. (Frascogna & Hetherington 2004, 158-159.)

PICTURE 2. Flogging Molly live in 2013 (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2013)
3.2.1 Club Gigs

Club gigs are an essential part for a newcomer act to build up an audience and make contacts in the music business. They are a good opportunity for practicing and collecting live experiences. Established musicians use club shows as a platform for making money for living on a regular base. The monthly programme of a club ranges from ‘showcase’ evenings over cover performances to evenings with several artists. Historically club venues (picture 3) are well known as the flagship for breaking new artists or establishing new trends like punk music in the 1970s. While club venues are mostly located in bigger cities, pubs will take on the same role in smaller cities. (Shuker 2012, 48-49.)

Clubs are usually equipped with a sound and lighting system which makes it possible to organize acoustic shows or even larger band performances in there. In most of the venues it is standard that the house technician is at the venue if an event is happening. The stage size of a club runs the gamut from small to medium; the seating ranges from standing only over some tables to fully seating of the club. Club shows are usually starting later in the evening which influences the age limit of the audience. People who are visiting club shows are mostly interested in music and tend to be record buyers and frequenters. (Goldstein 2008, 201.)

PICTURE 3. Legendary club venue “KLUBI” in Tampere, Finland (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
3.2.2 Festivals

Festivals have always been an impact factor in the history of the live music. The past century showed that they are important for keeping traditions alive, extending an audience base and giving a community feeling (Shuker 2012, 50). Woodstock 1969 made festivals the flagship for youth and naivety and with Live Aid in 1985 mankind discovered the importance of festivals as a strong tool for beneficial work (Shuker 2012, 51.). From the artists view festivals are a great opportunity to present themselves to a large audience. They are a useful instrument for showcasing an act, getting media attention and building up a network in the music scene (Goldstein 2008, 202-203.).

The duration of a festival usually lasts from one to three days. Bigger festivals can even cover one full week. Festivals offer the visitor a wide range of artists, which are usually part of a specific musical style. The use of several stages gives the possibility to have more than 100 bands playing over one weekend. Festivals rate as an important economic factor for the region they are held in. As the audience mostly ranges from local over national to international visitors (picture 4), festivals enormously boost the cultural tourism. (Shuker 2012, 51.)

PICTURE 4. Festival visitors at the SaariHelvetti festival 2015 (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2015)
3.2.3 Touring

In general touring is a recital of several concerts in different cities and venues. It is mostly used as a tool for promoting a new release or a new show and for building up a fan base. Beside the exciting part of travelling the world and getting out of the familiar surroundings, touring is for many musicians - since the dropping of the record sales - the most important factor for making a living. (Goldstein 2008, 186.)

Due to the digitalization of music, touring took over as the income source number one for an artist. While big artists like Sting used to earn 62% of their paycheck via recording, they do it nowadays via ticket sales. This also affects the ticket prices when it comes to big productions such as Rolling Stones or AC/DC. Bands of this size are used to royalty and somehow need to finance it. Surely it is controversial if one ticket costs several hundreds Euros but as long as people pay for it, prices will go higher. (Why are Concert…, 2016)

But touring is also a great chance for collecting live experience and networking. Even if touring has a regular daily routine, the daily performances differ a lot from each other; each night is a unique happening for the musician and the fan. The style of concerts always depend on the performers style of music. DJ performances will give the audience a different experience than for instance a heavy metal show. But even if the concert styles vary, all of those events have one common element: the community feeling. This applies to the artist, the people in front of the stage, the fans, and the people behind the stage, the crew. The crew are the most essential part of touring. It includes all the people who work for the artist such as a sound engineer, light engineer, backliner technicians for instruments, stage hands, security and tour manager. The size of the personnel always depends on the size of the tour production. Unknown artists who play small venues need a smaller crew than top acts with enormous stages. (Shuker 2012, 49-50.)

3.2.4 Sharing the Stage

Sharing the stage is an easy way for artists to gain attention by promoters and audience. It can become a great push for the artist’s career and help to cop new gigs for the future.
Performing as an opening act or a support act is one possibility to share the stage. Opener or support does not mean anything else than warming up the stage for a bigger act. It works like a small showcase where the artist can reach a large audience and develop reputation towards promoters. While an opening act only performs for one night at one venue, a support act escorts the main act for a whole tour. (Goldstein 2008, 212-217.)

The range of possibilities to achieve an opening slot for a major act is quite wide. The most time intensive option is building up a good reputation with the local promoter. This requires hard work and energy but the artist will be able to gain respect in the local music industry. Sometimes the artist also has the opportunity to buy a support slot, also known as a “buy on”. This involves mostly a lot of money and can happen in two different ways: the artist has to sell a minimum number of tickets or he pays the main performer. Also winning a competition can be a chance to snag a support slot. (Tam, 2012)

Another popular opportunity of stage sharing is the tour exchange. Two acts of two different regions or countries get together and play a joined tour in region A as well as region B. Tour exchange is a win-win situation for both acts as each act benefits from the others fan base. In the past years multiple-act tours experienced a steady growth in the live music business and give artists a wonderful possibility for gaining reputation and audience. Events like the “Vans Warped Tour” are a fusion of four or more bands of a certain genre who join together on one tour. The line-up ranges from well known scene-acts to unknown newcomers and gives especially the latter a great chance support their career. (Goldstein 2008, 212-217.)

### 3.3 Elements of the Live Music Business

With the rapid changes of the music industry in the past years, the live music sector became one of the most important fields in the music business. While the artist is the start of the value chain, he builds up a team of experts around him who support him on his way to the success (Shapiro, 2015). Artists are rarely interested in music business-related matters. Hiring a team of experts helps the artist to focus on creating music. But even if he is disinterested in the business part, he should choose his team carefully. The
worst scenario for the artist would be picking the wrong people and “set it on auto p-
ilot”. (Passmann 2015, 11-13.)

3.3.1 The Artist

Building up a serious career in the music business is a long way, which demands a lot of hard work. The artist himself sets in the beginning of his career the goals that he wants to reach, which instrument he will learn and which music style he will perform. These decisions point him in the direction of persons he needs to get to know in the business and what skills he needs to achieve. The most important thing is that the artist has confidence in about himself – even though he should not tend to overrate himself. Professionalism is the most essential parameter of a successful career. It contains not only how well the artist plays his instruments but also human traits such as reliability, honesty, frankness, stamina and positive attitude. These are the main points which decide how other people will see the artist and with whom he will work together. As long as the artist keeps his sense of reality distinctive he will be able to realize his weaknesses soon enough. Setting up future goals means curbing expectations to avoid disappointments and having enough ambition to become successful. Especially a “healthy” ambition will give the artist positive energy to achieve dreams. (Lyng 2002, 16-17.)

3.3.2 The Artist Manager

Basically an artist can have two different managers. On the one hand the business man-
ger who helps him with financial matters and on the other hand the personal manager - also called artist manager - who helps with the development of the artist (Lyng 2002, 20.). The latter is the key figure in an artist’s career. He acts as the facilitator between artist and other business experts such as agent, record label, publisher promoter, sponsor or media and helps to build up an image and a fan base (About the Live Music…, n.d.). The artist manager is the artist’s representative in the business, which gives the artist the possibility to focus on the process of creating music. According to Rutter (2011, 140.), a good artist manager features “persistence, perseverance, determination, patience, insen-
sitivity to criticism and the ability to have an undying faith in their artist and product, regardless of what others may say”.
3.3.3 The Booking Agent

The booking agent is the touring expert of an artist and takes care about everything which is related to touring such as booking club shows, tours, support tours and festival slots (Shapiro, 2015). He is dealing with venue promoters and convinces them to book the artist. Smaller agents take care of booking gigs in pubs, clubs and smaller venues while bigger agents negotiate shows for large concert tours. Booking agents normally do not use exclusive agreements but set up contracts with the venue promoters about the concert date. After the artist completes the show, the agent gets paid by commission, which ranges mostly between 10-20%. If the artist works together with a manager, the booking agent mostly deals with him about touring-related matters. (Rutter 2011, 55-56.)

3.3.4 The Promoter

The promoter is the person who organizes concerts, festivals or galas and hires the artist for an evening. He books the event venue and is responsible for the promotion of the event as well as the overall running of the evening. Companies like Live Nation can even act as a promoter for a complete tour of a certain artist and promote the tour towards the audience. In the past years it has become more and more popular that venues book acts by themselves or even hire a promoter who books the venue and makes the deals with the artists afterwards. (Passmann 2015, 400-401.)

Together with the agent and the artist manager, the promoter decides on a reasonable ticket price to cover costs and hopefully make a profit out of the event (About the Live Music…, n.d.). According to Passmann (2015, 400.), promoters can work as a local promoter (the promoter works in one city or area), regional promoter (the promoter works in several regions), national promoter (the promoter works in one country) or international promoter (the promoter works worldwide). But especially in the past years it occurred that also venues owners increasingly tend to book the venue’s programme by themselves. The so-called venue deal is a contract which is directly made between venue owner and artist and makes the venue owner act as a promoter himself. (Passmann 2015, 400.)
3.3.5 The Fans

Fans are the key element of the live music industry. They are the ones who buy the tickets to see a live show and give the artist the possibility to build up a successful career. Fandom is the main word for fans and their behaviour towards their favourite artists. This includes collecting records, visiting live shows, creating scrapbooks or communicating with other fans (picture 5; picture 6). Many artists’ fans are so passionate that they even establish fan clubs or organize international fan conventions. Being a fan is more than just the admiration of an artist. It gives the possibility to become part of a huge community, which “is not defined in the traditional term of status” and create unforgettable personal moments. (Shuker 2012, 167-168.)

For me being a fan is a little bit more than just finding something interesting or admirable. [...] For me it means something that brings new experiences to my life. With bands it's mostly about going to gigs, seeing new places, meeting new people or travelling with your best friends - everything just happens with a cool soundtrack. After several years you will have so many awesome memories and great stories to tell that "listening to a band" has become quite a big part of your life. (Paarto 2016)

PICTURE 5. Moona Paarto and her sister Noora with their fan collection of the band “Santa Cruz” (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2015)
Especially in the past years fandom has reached with the rise of the social media a complete new level and become even more communicative, imaginative, interesting and intelligent (Duffett 2014, 4.). According to Paarto (2016), finding information about the favourite artist such as tour dates, songs and photos has become much more easier. Through the regular use of the social media, the artist gets closer to his fans and steps out from the inaccessible star image. “It’s difficult to say that someone is your “god” when you have just seen a Snapchat video, where he is eating a hangover pizza”, states Paarto (2016).

PICTURE 6. Fan crowd of the Welsh rock band “Skindred” (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
4 BOOKING AGENCIES & AGENTS

4.1 Booking Agency

If the artist is eagerly developing his music and stage performance, he will be able to build up a decent fan base. Referring to his live music career, it will give him the possibility to do headliner shows and tours. At this stage he will start looking for a suitable booking agency and agent. (Cattermole, 2012)

The booking agency will take care of all the artists’ performances and books the artist to perform in live clubs, festivals or even private events. Due to good contacts, it is also usual that booking agencies get the artist support slots which he would never be able to get without an agency. In general a booking agency acts as a “negotiation-tool” between promoter and artist. Booking agencies exist in all sizes but you can differ between two different kinds:

- **Major Agency**
  Major agencies are also called “superagencies”. They have offices in big cities all over the world and operate internationally. Getting a deal with a major agency is mostly combined with a record deal.

- **Independent Agency**
  Independent agencies are tractable agencies, which mostly only have one office in one city. They are only acting as an agency and have nothing to do with record deals.

To find the right agency is a well reasoned step for the artist and can become very tricky and long-winded. (Frascogna & Hetherington 2004, 166-167.)

4.1.1 Choosing a Booking Agency

While choosing the right booking agency, the artist manager will be the leading role. As he has a concrete plan of the development of the artist, he knows the most suitable agency for the artist. Booking agencies are mostly specialized in a certain genre of music, which makes it important to consider in which markets the agency operates and which contacts it has. The agency should not be chosen by the knowledge about suc-
cessful co-operations with other artists in the past but about how passionate and interested the agency acts towards the new artist. If these parameters are complied, manager and artist start to work closely together with the booking agency to shape a realistic career plan. (Frascogna & Hetherington 2004, 167.)

4.2 Booking Agent

The booking agent is skilled with coordinating everything, which is related to musical performances as well as matching the artist with suitable venues. He can work independently but is mostly located in a booking agency where he replies to customer requests and builds up his own artist roster. His work is driven by passion about music in general and the music of his artist which makes him become an important partner in the artist’s business and an essential part of his development in the live music industry. (Music Booking Agent…, n.d.)

A huge advantage is a well-connected booking agent who can make the artist more visible and rises booking or support slot opportunities. But while an artist can convince a veteran agent mostly only with a track record, an artist could also benefit from choosing a newcomer agent. He may not have as much contacts and knowledge as the veteran booking agent but he can serve the artist with fresh ideas and a lot of time as his roster does not cover too many other artists. (Goldstein 2008, 418-420.)

4.2.1 Responsibilities of a Booking Agent

According to Goldstein (2008, 424-425.), “any partnership so intimately involved in developing an artist’s career must be based on honesty, reality, open communication, accessibility, and remain innovative and trusting”. Only if artist and agent find the right balance of those components, the agent will be able to fulfil his responsibilities in the best way.

Beside his main responsibility of booking live shows for the artist, the agent has much more organisational duties he needs to follow up. Booking a show is mostly linked with a lot of E-Mails and phone calls with the promoter regarding important parameters like
performance fee, show day and additional accomplishments like accommodation or catering. After the agent gets a suitable booking offer and the artist agrees on that, the agent signs a contract on the artist’s behalf with the promoter. It consists of all agreed terms and secures the clause of a show cancellation. Afterwards the booking agent sends the promoter the artist’s hospitality and technical rider as well as promo material. In response he gets back all important show-related information for the itinerary. (Goldstein 2008, 424-425.)

The itinerary (picture 7) is the touring routine of the artist (Passmann 2015, 396). It is a collection of papers, which gives the artist the information on which day he will play in which city. According to McDonald (2016), it consists of details about each show’s venue, schedule, accommodation, catering, backline share as well as contact details for sound engineer and promoter. Beside those basic information it additionally contains a map out of the whole tour including driving directions and travelling times. The itinerary is the artist’s “life-on-the-road BFF” and includes all info in a handy place. Surely the bigger the tour is the more complex the itinerary gets.

The booking agent is also responsible for taking care about financial matters of a show. After the promoter returns the signed performance contract together with the performance fee, the agent stores the money as a deposit in an account. The artist gets paid after he has completed his job and after the agent has deducted his commission from the fee. It is also common that the booking agent contacts the promoter after the show to make sure that he was satisfied with the artist’s performance and how the show went in general. These are important information as it gives the agent an insight about the value of the artist and his public presentation. (Goldstein 2008, 424-426.)
### Commission of a Booking Agent

The level of the commission always depends on the agency and ranges mostly from 10% to 20% (Goldstein 2008, 413.). If an artist has a good reputation it will be easy for the agent to sell him. Higher performance fees allow lower commission percentages while lower fees cause higher percentages. All in all, the artist should understand that the commission is negotiable within his career. (Goldstein 2008, 426.)
4.2.3 The Agent’s Requirements for Booking a New Artist

Booking agents are very careful with signing new artists to their roster because a new act always involves more expenses for the agent. Making phone calls, developing promo material and promoting the new roster are just a few of these. The most agents the artist also because of his sales potential and market interest. A new record, a decent list of played live shows and a good (social) media presence can higher the chances of getting into a booking agency. (Goldstein 2008, 428.)

According to Goldstein (2008, 428-429.), these are reasons why an agent will consider booking a new artist:

• Agent needs to believe in the artist’s music
• Artist needs to have a record released
• Artist needs to put effort to musical career
• Artist should have a manager who is the contact person (or be good accessible by himself)
• Artist should have a fan base for strong ticket sales

4.2.4 Difference between Booking Agent and Artist Manager

It is no surprise that many people mix up the roles of booking agent and manager as both positions work closely together with the artist. Even if some booking agents tend to take over some tasks of the manager, both roles are clearly defined.

The booking agent focuses on the artist’s touring and works together with the management about all tour-related things and strategizes tours around releases (Shapiro, 2015). The manager helps the artist to build up a career and runs the strategy. He is planning the career, developing the artist and arranges record deals, publishing deals or a booking agency. Managers get paid by commission, which ranges normally from 10% to 50%. Other than the booking agent, they get a percentage out of every income the artist has, which includes live performances, record deals or publishing deals. (Goldstein 2008, 413-414.)
According to Rutter (2011, 143.), a professional artist manager has momentous contacts and connections to all angles in the music business to push the artist’s career and is characterized by honesty, openness and transparency while Goldstein (2008, 418-423.) states that the relationship between both parties should also be based on reality, trust, good communication and receptiveness for new ideas and strategies.
5 THE ROLE OF MUSIC BOOKING AGENTS IN FINLAND

5.1 Interview

As this thesis refers to the Finnish music business, the upcoming chapters and paragraphs will be based on seven expert interviews, which were held between March and April 2016 with booking agents and music artists from Finland. The structure of the content relates to the scheme of the interviews, which were designed to achieve information about:

- Changes in the FMB in the past 5-10 years
- How these changes influenced the Finnish live music business
- Booking agencies in Finland (major and independent; strengths & weakness)
- The role of agents in the FMB
- Importance of a booking agent in the artist’s career
- Requirements of an agent to book a new artist
- Music Booking Agencies in Finland
- Future of booking agents in the FMB

To acquire a large amount of information, the interview partners were as well part of an independent or a major booking agency as business veterans or newcomers. For every agent it got chosen one artist from his roster. As one interview partner was not able to fit the interview session to his schedule, the total amount of interviews counts three booking agents and four artists. Agent and artist got interviewed separately from each other to avoid that both of them exercise influence over the business partner. As the interview questions were not sent to the experts beforehand, the answers turned out to be honest and unstudied. Each upcoming paragraph can be seen as a summary of the gained information of all seven interviews including expressive direct quotations. A small introduction of the interview partners will give the reader a better impression of the expert’s position in the FMB as well as background information about their life career.
SAMY ELBANNA

Samy Elbanna (picture 8) is singer and mastermind of the Finnish trash metal band Lost Society. Lost Society was founded in 2010 and became within the past six years one of the hottest new metal acts from Finland. In 2016 the band released their third studio album “Braindead”, toured Europe together with Exodus and is currently playing a two-month tour in Finland.

Booking Agency: Greybeard Concerts & Management
Agency Type: Independent Booking Agency
Booking Agent: Jouni Markkanen

PICTURE 8. Samy Elbanna, singer and mastermind of the Finnish trash metal band Lost Society (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
JANNE JOUTSENNIEMI

Janne Joutsenniemi (picture 9) is booking agent in Live Nation Finland for 5 years now. He has been a musician all his life and played in bands like Stone or Suburban Tribe. His roster ranges from Finnish pop music to English spoken punk-garage-country music. He identifies himself the most with rock music.

Booking Agency: Live Nation Finland
Agency Type: Major Booking Agency
Roster: Shiraz Lane, Anssi Kela, Black Magic Six, …

PICTURE 9. Janne Joutsenniemi, booking agent at Live Nation Finland (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
NOORA LOUHIMO

Noora Louhimo (picture 10) has always been a passionate singer whose biggest idol is Janis Joplin. Since 2012 she is singer of the Finnish metal band Battle Beast. Beside her work in the rising metal combo, Noora is currently also working on her solo project NOEX.

**Booking Agency:** Master Events (Battle Beast)

**Agency Type:** Independent Booking Agency

**Booking Agent:** Kari Penttinen

PICTURE 10. Noora Louhimo, singer of Battle Beast and NOEX (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
JOUNI MARKKANEN

Jouni Markkanen (picture 11) is head of the company Greybeard Concerts & Management. Before he founded Greybeard, he worked as a booking agent for King Foo Entertainment. Beside the agent job, Jouni is active as manager for a few Finnish artists such as Amorphis and promoter for one of Finland’s most important metal events, the TUS-KA Festival. Back in the days, he played in several bands and worked as a booker for legendary venues like Lepakko and Nosturi.

**Booking Agency:**  Greybeard Concerts & Management  
**Agency Type:**  Independent Booking Agency  
**Roster:**  Lost Society, Turisas, The Local Band, …

PICTURE 11. Jouni Markkanen, Greybeard Concerts & Management (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
ROWAN RAFFERTY

Rowan Rafferty (picture 12) is managing director, agent and promoter at NEM Agency. He already got into contact with the Finnish Music Business in his teenage years. He worked as a DJ and sound engineer before he joined NEM. Nowadays he books about 18 domestic artists as well as 40-50 international acts. Beside his agent activity, he works as tour manager for the Finnish teenager idol ROBIN and as a sound technician for the Indie-rock band Disco Ensemble.

**Booking Agency:** NEM Agency

**Agency Type:** Independent Booking Agency

**Roster:** Amaranthe, Turmion Kätilöt, Lovex, …

PICTURE 12. Rowan Rafferty, managing director, agent and promoter at NEM Agency (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
SHIRAZ LANE (JOEL HILJANEN, HANNES KETT & ANA WILLMANN)

Formed in 2011, Shiraz Lane (picture 13) is a young hard rock band from Vantaa whose music style gets influenced by 80s hair metal heroes such as Guns N’Roses or Aerosmith. The quintet is known as an impulsive and energetic live act. In April 2016 Shiraz Lane released their debut album “For Crying Out Loud”.

**Booking Agency:** Live Nation  
**Agency Type:** Major Booking Agency  
**Booking Agent:** Janne Joutsenniemi

![Picture 13. From left to right: Joel Alex, Hannes Kett & Ana Willmann, band members the Finnish hard rock combo Shiraz Lane (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)]
TORSTI MÄKINEN

Torsti Mäkinen (picture 14) - whose stage name is Theon - is singer of the Tampere based pop-rock band Lovex. With their single “Guardian Angel” and the appropriate album “Divine Insanity”, the combo gained massive success in Finland and Europe in 2006. Lovex are currently working on their 5th studio album and the new single “Dust into Diamonds” will be released in May 2016.

Booking Agency: NEM Agency
Agency Type: Independent Booking Agency
Booking Agent: Rowan Rafferty

PICTURE 14. Torsti Mäkinen, singer of the Finnish pop-rock sextet Lovex (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2016)
5.2 Short History of the Finnish Music

The Finnish music has its origins in different major traditions of folk music. Especially the Finnish epic Kalevala – which is a poem singing form of music that covers stories about legendary Finnish ancient heroes – counts as pioneer of the Finnish music. In the beginning of the 19th century the Finnish popular music found in J. Alfred Tanner its first well-known artist whose songs influenced the popular entertainment industry years later (Gronow 2002, 79.). The most familiar music style in Finland is called Iskelmä and describes the Finnish pop song music which is equivalent to the German “Schlager” music. The first super star of the Iskelmä movement has been Olavi Virta who recorded his first record in 1947 (Gronow 2002, 189-190.).

The wild 1970s brought progressive rock groups like Wigwam success outside of Finland. Quite focused on the UK and Europe, Wigwam has been the first Finnish band playing Roskilde Festival in Denmark and the first Finnish band with having the potential to become something big outside of the country (Silas 2002, 183). Within Finland, artists like Dave Lindholm gained a high popularity (Liete 2002, 55). Also the punk movement reached with Pelle Miljoona and Eppu Normaali the Finnish music market in the late 70s.

Even if Finnish artists tend to sing English to be more open for the international market, Suomirock bands have always been an essential part of the Finnish music market. Suomirock covers rock bands who focus on writing lyrics in the Finnish language. Dingo, Yö, Miljoonasade or Apulanta are just a few famous names. But Finland has also always been a huge market for musical sub-genres. Rockabilly got popular with the Teddy and The Tigers and the Finnish metal music caused an enormous stir internationally with the cello-rockers of Apocalyptica covering Metallica songs in 1996 or the victory of Lordi in the Eurovision Songcontest in 2006. Especially between the 90s and the early 21st century, Finnish music acts gained huge success all over the world. HIM, The Rasmus or Tampere based bands, so-called Manserock bands, like Negative or Lovex are just some examples. The change of the global music industry and the drop of record sales affected also the Finnish music market. Even if Iskelmä artists like Kaija Koo are still reaching a large target audience, instrumental bands got more or less replaced by an immense hype about Hip Hop artists like Cheek and pop acts like Sanni.
5.3 Development of the Finnish Music Business in the past 10 Years

Not only the technology gets constantly developed but also the mankind develops itself continuously. Referring to the Finnish music, business people get more professional in the way they are working and thinking. Also being a musician turned into a serious day-job by now. The certainty to be able to earn the monthly income with creating music made also the competition in the industry grow. The digital age offered much more electronic artists, rappers and DJ’s the opportunity to conquer a slice of the cake, while bands are losing out and getting winnowed. “I feel some of the most successful bands have grown bigger than anything ever in Finland”, states Mäkinen (2016), “but the middle class bands – like we used to be – have gotten very small.”

Another essential change in the Finnish music business refers to the marketing of an act. The overblown media culture these days makes it much more difficult. “Marketing and everything was really easy because there were just a couple of magazines”, knows Joutsenniemi (2016). He also points out that the media field is “much more spread nowadays”. While years ago printed magazines like Soundi, Suosikki, Rumba or Inferno were the leading marketing platform for bands and musicians, artists and managers focus nowadays more and more on big online music platforms and the artist’s presence in social media.

But the progress in the Finnish music industry does not only have drawbacks. According to Rafferty (2016), the business became more international which caused an increasing band import and export. Also a rising number of domestic bands is able to play big arena shows while this privilege just applied to major bands by then.

Even if the competition gets harder and the business veterans grow older, the Finnish music industry keeps developing the entire time and a new generation of motivated people is already entering the business.

5.4 Drastic Changes in the Finnish Live Music Business

As the music industry is becoming more and more professional, it also affects the live music business in Finland. Artists building up bigger and more impressive shows, which involves more complex live productions. Thus booking agents need to figure out,
which locations are able to defray the technical demands and host a band with a massive production. Also many event venues are not only specializing in a certain music genre nowadays but also fighting for survival. “A lot of venues are going through tough financial times with the whole depression and the government taxing absolutely everything”, states Rafferty (2016). This influences also the “sale” of an artist towards the venue. While the performance fees are rising higher to cover production costs and allow the artist at least a decent payment for the gig, venues are tending to be not able to pay high fees anymore. According to Joutsenniemi (2016), an agent “cannot ask for a fee from a club, which it cannot effort to pay”. In Joutsenniemi’s opinion this is causing bad business and an agent has to find a performance fee on which both sides can agree.

Even the digitalisation shapes Finland’s live music business. While booking shows became more digital and E-mails as well as online platforms like “Artist Exchange” undertook personal phone calls, the gaining popularity of video games and home entertainment forces the live music industry to be much more creative to animate people to come to clubs and see live shows. A huge challenge for venues as live music seems to be the only income source for nowadays musicians. “Especially now when streaming is the thing, live music comes in as a very, very important part for artists and bands”, states Louhimo (2016), “because it is almost the only way to get actually the money or to sell your CD’s.” However, Elbanna (2016, picture 15) considers this situation optimistically. “I would say that the situation isn’t really as bad as some people might think”, he states. In his opinion the last years brought many new bands to the business and especially the support on the part of the fans is very incredible.

[...] The fans just have been great. Because they have been helping us all the time. And you can see that steadily more people coming to gigs and supporting the band, which is really cool. So, I would say only the big difference is just that people are actually supporting bands more and more in my opinion. (Elbanna 2016)
5.5 The Role of Booking Agents in the Finnish Music Business

The booking agent is one of the most important parts in nowadays (live) music industry and is deemed to be one of the key-players in the team of experts, which is working for the artist. Having a good and reliable agent is a huge help for the artist and his career. “If you have a good agent, you play better festivals, you get better gigs”, explains Rafferty (2016), “and you will normally get more money.” As live shows got established as the main income source for musicians in the past years, the booking agent delivers the artist the yearly income.

With the rise of the digital age, more and more musicians try to book their gigs by themselves. “A lot of bands have tried and most of the bands have failed”, states Rafferty (2016) and makes the point that booking agents are still inevitably if an artist is aiming for a professional career. According to Louhimo (2016), having an agent “makes it easier for the artist just to concentrate on the real job that they have; and this is developing themselves as musicians and their own music.” Agents and agencies are not only taking care about the artist’s business matters like bookings, show production, invoicing and bookkeeping. They are also able to catch exclusive support or festival slots for their
artists because promoters trust them and venues are used to buy from them. This knowledge is the most essential reason for an artist to work together with an agent. “They are good in what they do”, states Hiljanen (2016), “and they can get us some shows we couldn’t get by ourselves.” Also his band colleague Kett (2016) agrees on that: “They get you to those festivals and all those bigger venues you couldn’t go without them.”

Unless you are a very, very good businessman and keen on doing the hard work all the agencies do, you really need a booking agent. I am bad in selling myself; I am bad in selling anything. We definitely need one. And of course the contacts and arranging all the stuff involving touring; it takes quite a lot of time. (Mäkinen 2016)

In Joutsenniemi’s (2016) opinion, booking agents are also growing more and more into the role of an A&R (artist & repertoire) which is usually the department for talent scouting and artist development of a record label. Meanwhile agents are an important part when it comes to finding new talents, building up new careers and making artists more visible. It is crucial for an agent to keep the eyes open, follow the development and trends in the music business and figure out ways for the artist to play new shows.

5.5.1 The Booking Agent’s Importance for the Artist’s Career

Getting a booking agent on board is for many artists a huge adjustment but also a big relief. Even if the manager and the record label are still the crucial factors when it comes to the artist’s development, the agent can be able to push the musician to another level on the part of the live music sector. Beside a talented and ambitious artist, smart thinking, tangible planning and faith in the musician pave the way for a successful collaboration. “It is very important that you are active and you have a good imagination what to do next”, explains Joutsenniemi (2016), “you plan one or two years ahead.” According to Rafferty (2016), it is important that the manager takes care that the agent is given the possibility to focus on the gig booking and does not get involved in anything outside of his task field. “A lot of times there’s a false consumption that the agent is the mother of the band or the father and the agent needs to take care about everything”, he describes his experiences, “but I would say the manager and the record label
should take care about that stuff and the agent is the one who develops them through the live business.”

You are reachable but not 24/7. You are not their mommy or their daddy. You don’t have to answer for a missing beer crate. If you answer as an agent in the night for these kind of questions, you have made something wrong in your business plan. Agent is agent. And agent is not the nanny. (Markkanen 2016)

If the agent is able to focus on his responsibilities, the artist will liberally benefit from it. Regarding Louhimo (2016, picture 16), an increasing amount of live shows will help the artist to reach more visibility and fans. “The feeling that I have right now is that our career is really going forward and actually it hasn’t stopped in any point”, she declares. Signing with a booking agent has also been for Mäkinen and his band Lovex an important step in their career. “We started gaining popularity at the same time when we got signed to our agency”, he states, “when we didn’t have an agency, we only did a few shows in Tampere and that’s about it.”

PICTURE 16. Noora Louhimo on stage with Battle Beast (Photo: Carolin Büttner 2015)
5.5.2 Attributes of a Good Booking Agent

The main idea about being a good booking agent is surely the ability to get as much live shows for the artist as possible. But being a good booking agent means much more than just keep musicians touring and having good connections to venues. It is necessary that an agent understands the artist’s audience, the artist himself and has the right strategy for supporting him on his way to the top. This involves as well business skills as social competences.

“A good booking agent is confident”, states Rafferty (2016), “can also be direct but also has a sensitive side.” It is important that the agent knows the character, the strengths and the weaknesses of his artist to achieve the best possible outcome for his career. According to Willmann and Kett (2016), the most essential attributes of a good booking agent are the faith in the artist and the development to become a part of the artist’s “family”. Therefore a good communication and a good chemistry between both sides are indispensable. Even if the agent gives the musician principally the feeling to be loved, he needs to keep a healthy standard of authority. The artist needs to respect the agent’s opinions and take his point of views seriously.

It is very important to keep the artists up to-date about what is happening. Let them know their weaknesses. A good agent is also able to tell his or her hit band when to not do gigs. That's something, which can be very difficult when you have a band, which brings a lot of money. It is your job to keep the band touring but at some stage it is really important to know when to stop and to tell the band when they shouldn't do shows; when they should do an album or take a break. And also to have the guts to discuss it with the record label and say your direct opinion. (Rafferty 2016)

But not only the artist is expecting results by the agent. He also needs to foster a good relationship with his business partners such as venues or promoters. Referring to Markkanen (2016), a good booking agent needs to be reliable, honest and should not promise too much either towards the promoter or the artist. “You deliver what you promised to deliver”, he states convincingly. Also Joutsenniemi (2016) concurs with Markkanen’s opinion. “Keep your word: if you have a reserved date, you will do it or let it go in an early stage. Don’t keep it for nothing”, he clarifies and adds, “you should have the right
fee – not the highest fee! Because you have to do a good cooperation with the promoters.”

5.5.3 Experience vs. Inexperience

Being experienced is in every job field a huge plus. Knowing certain work flows or how to handle difficult situations, is a big advantage. But compared to other businesses, the music industry seems to be more relaxed. “Experience is important”, explains Joutsenniemi (2016), “but this is some kind of work you learn while doing.” Also Markkanen (2016) agrees on this point. “You can always start”, he points out, “the most important thing is that you learn from your mistakes and you listen to your clients and partners.” As there is no school in Finland based on how to learn to become a music booking agent, the education is based on making own experiences, pushing yourself to limits, building up a network and – the most important thing – having a sense of music. Within the time you will get to know how the industry works, how venues function and what are your responsibilities. Building up a good reputation in this process is a mandatory thing as well as being patient and mindful. According to Markkanen (2016), it is very easy to build up this kind of reputation that people do not reply to you. Also Rafferty (2016) is convinced that experience makes things easier but is not a crucial requirement. “I think a good agent doesn’t necessarily have to have big experience”, he states, “because if you find the right bands and if your band is interesting, you will always be able to sell it.”

[…] maybe it is hard or even impossible to start from zero. It is really difficult to start from the scratch and you don’t know anything about how the world where bands “live” works. It is not the easiest job but it is also not rocket sciences. (Joutsenniemi 2016)

5.5.4 Choosing an Artist Roster

Finland is a small country, which has always been music-enthusiastic and features thousands of different bands. It is natural that booking agents have to be picky with the choice of their roster. Getting booked by an agent requires some small but significant
demands. The most essential requirement is that the agent is interested about the artist’s music and believes that together with his support the artist could gain some popularity. According to Rafferty (2016), it is also very helpful if the artist has already a decent record deal, airplay in the radio and shows with a great attendance. Therefore a strong and active appearance in the social media is in nowadays’ digital age unavoidable. If the artist is not doing anything for years, it can also be possible that the agent will reduce his roster. Especially if the socially chemistry between both sides is not balanced, and the artist prefers booking shows by himself, most agents would suggest the musician to work with another agent.

If a band is too needy; if they take up too much of my time on everything other that has nothing to do with show booking. Or if they call me at 10 o’clock in the evening to tell me that he just wrote a new song. So, if they are too needy and take a way too much time in comparison to the amount of shows they do and the amount of money they bring in; that would be a big criteria. (Rafferty 2016)

5.6 Music Booking Agencies in Finland

More professionals in the business signify automatically a higher competition. While back in the days Live Nation has been the biggest booking agency in Finland, Sony Music or Warner Music already caught up with the leading agency and established themselves as so-called major agencies. The reason for the growth of the major label agency departments, are the record deals they sign with their artists. Those mostly include automatically an agency contract. The possibility for smaller agencies – also named independent agencies – to catch a promising and good artist in these given circumstances is quite challenging but not impossible. “There’s a big competition between every agency”, states Rafferty (2016), “everybody is after every band and sometimes bands change agencies.” But even if the competition is growing, most of the agencies prefer working together. “When it comes to domestic bookings, we are pretty open”, explains Rafferty (2016),”we share a lot of information between each other because it is such a small market and I think it is important that we work together.” If it comes to international acts, agencies tend to be a little more secret but still cooperative. According to Joutseniemi (2016), the competition in the business is a healthy competition and because of
Finland being such a small country, backstabbing will sooner or later cause the exclusion from the industry.

5.6.1 Choosing a Booking Agency: Independent vs. Major

Each agency – is it a major or an independent - has strengths and weaknesses. The choice of the agency comes mostly naturally and through certain contacts. As the artist is moreover in the initial stage of his career when he gets the first time in contact with a booking agency, he is inexperienced and just relies on his first instincts while choosing. Main criteria are thereby based on trust, sympathy, good connections to venues and faith in the artist on the part of the agent. Only the artist himself knows the best which agency fits to him and can support him with his future plans.

The thing with booking agents is that when you talk to them for the first time – when you have a meeting with them – you can see at once what the person is like. They have to be strict or they have to have the fact that they get shit done. But at the same time you gotta have the buddy effect: they are fun to work with, they are fun to hang out with. Because in the end of the day you know that you gonna be with them and working with them for a long time. (Elbanna 2016)

While independent agencies seem to be more reachable, majors offer the artist one main reason to join their roster: power. “The possibilities are limit-less”, explains Kett (2016) the choice of Shiraz Lane becoming part of Live Nation Finland, “if they want to support us, we will open for major big bands and tour.” According to his booking agent Joutsenniemi (2016), the reason for these opportunities underlies the financial securities on part of the major agency. Thus they have the chance to support the artist with large marketing campaigns and offer them an artist insurance. Especially the latter is pretty unusual in the agency market and only gets offered by Live Nation in Finland. It secures the artist’s performance fee if the promoter of the club is not able to pay. Even though the agent still needs to arrange getting back the money from the venue at some point, he can pay his artist right after the gig is done. But major agencies also have disadvantages. Being a big company means being a bit more slowly with meaningful decisions. Even if
this is not directly affecting the work of the agents in the company, it can be avoided by choosing an independent agency.

Bigger is better in some ways. And in some other ways independent agencies are better. Some other companies are quicker and easier to move. They can react to new things more swiftly and bigger agencies are like a bigger box. They turn a bit more slowly! (Joutsenniemi 2016)

Independent agencies are quicker in their moves and much more flexible when it comes to important decisions. Even if their financial budget is limited and they need to double-check where to invest their money, they can offer the artist a close relationship and handle everything on a personal level. Having also only a tractable artist roster, gives them the possibility to be very precise with each artist. “Strength is 100% guarantee delivery”, explains Markkanen (2016) Greybeard’s strategy. Most of the independent agencies also specialized on a certain music style. This can be seen as a disadvantage but can also turn out very positively for an artist. Rafferty (2016), whose company is focused on metal and rock music, considers that as a strength. “If it is a metal band, we bring a lot more to the table than many agencies”, he explains, “we have our own metal festivals, we work with so many metal promoters and productions that I think for a metal band we are very strong just because of the contacts we have.” Every agency in Finland follows the same rules and delivers together with the others the same territory and market. If major or independent – the artist is always looking for a reliable and supportive agency. “Action speaks more than titles”, states Elbanna (2016), “I don’t really care what you are: if you are an independent or a major or whatever. For us, everyone who helps us, is a major help.”

5.7 Future of Music Booking Agents in Finland

Even though the music business in Finland is constantly changing, the role and responsibilities of the booking agent will stay the same and the agents do not see any big changes regarding this in the future. “I think it’s pretty standard at the end what a booking agent needs to do and what he does”, states Rafferty (2016). The only challenge will be the still increasing bad economical situation of the country, which also hardly affects concert venues. Rugged financial times put the existence of many clubs to an acid test.
“There is not like even 50% left that it used to be back when we were touring”, explains Mäkinen (2016) today’s venue situation. Rafferty (2016) assumes that there will be changes concerning the places to whom the agent will sell his artists to and that some cities will alter in general when they are going to lose their major live venues. But even if the current situation is not really easy and promising, the agents stay optimistic and positive. “I think things are going to the better direction”, states Joutsenniemi (2016), “the live music business is doing very nice and good.”
6 CONCLUSION

The booking agent figures an essential role in nowadays music industry. He is one of the key players in the artist’s expert team and able to develop the artist – together with the management and the record label – the most. Working with a booking agent is, for most of the artists, a big relief as the agent takes care of the show bookings, pre-production of gigs as well as financial matters of every performance. The agent is a crucial part of giving the artist the freedom and opportunity to focus on his real job: creating music. While choosing a suitable agent, the artist attaches importance to a few main criteria. Therefor a good booking agent is reliable, honest, social and communicative. He cherishes a good and trustful relationship with venues and promoters and can offer the artist festival or support slots, which the artist would never be able to get without the agent. Gaining thereby more visibility and a bigger fan base is just one advantage of working together with an agent. Even though the booking agent spends a lot of time pushing the artist to another level on the part of the live music sector, he is not the nanny of the musician. It is important that the management takes care that the agent can concentrate on the show booking to achieve the best possible result in the cooperation. Becoming an agent is simply learning by doing. Even if an understanding of the music world is a crucial requirement to start with, making mistakes and learning from wrong decisions is the best education for an agent. For expanding his roster, the agent needs to believe in the artist, see a commercial potential in him and wants to become a part of his development.

The massive development of the digital age turned the live music sector into the most essential part of today’s music industry and the artist’s yearly income depends on the amount of live shows he is playing per year instead of sold records. But even if the live music industry gained more importance and the digitalisation made communication ways easier, the role and task fields of a booking agent are still globally the same and will not change within the future. With taking a closer look into the Finnish music business, the only big challenge for an agent is the current economical situation. Especially Finland’s live music business is going through tough times with venues fighting for their existences and against high taxes. However the Finnish music market turns more and more professional, more people are entering the industry and more agencies get established. Meanwhile artists are able to choose between major agencies with more
money and independent agencies with a faster capability. The artist himself decides which agency is more suitable for his career plans and his future plans.

Subsuming being a booking agent is a hard job, which requires a lot of time, patience and a good network in the business. It is important to understand that this job field is based on passion towards music and not on the achievement of reaching a millionaire status. Lucky agents with popular and well selling artists can be able to gain a good monthly income but as the business is extremely fast changing all the time, high earnings can turn into a passing phase. But being part of the artist’s long way to the top and see the development from playing small youth centre stages to big major venues is an amazing trophy and an incredible feeling for a booking agent.

The Finnish music business is a fast changing industry and with an increasing amount of industry professionals, the competition gets bigger all the time. The author encourages to take a closer look into the topic of music booking agents in Finland in a few years to observe changes of the role and importance of an agent. A research of possible ways to develop the job field of a music booking agent would be also a great opportunity to prospect the fast pace of the industry and the thereby required improvement on part of the agent.
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In books is written "Being a fan is more than just the admiration of an artist". Do you agree with that? And what does it mean for you "being a fan"?

For me being a fan is a little bit more than just finding something interesting or admirable. It's always different when it comes to the movies, books, bands or certain people; but for me it means something that brings new experiences to my life. With bands it's mostly about going to gigs, seeing new places, meeting new people or travelling with your best friends - everything just happens with a cool soundtrack. After several years you will have so many awesome memories and great stories to tell that "listening a band" has become a quite big part of your life.

Of course I admire and respect good musicians and great performers - but it's more about the show than just one showman. A good concert makes me forget all everyday responsibilities and boring Monday mornings. A good song makes you wanna hear more. There are some bands that I've been listening for years. Being a fan means also being happy and proud of their success and all new releases.

Maybe being a fan of a band includes feelings and moments I have experienced with their music. It's also waiting, remembering and also somehow needing more those kind of good times.

You are fan of the Finnish band "Santa Cruz". You and your friends travel even to other countries to see their live shows. What is so special about being fan of this band that you do that?

I have seen hundreds of gigs from tons of different bands and many of them have been really good. With Santa Cruz it started just accidentally out of nowhere - the most important thing was that their gigs were totally awesome and they still are. Maybe also that me and all my best friends like the same band - that's always the beginning of an adventure.

Live shows with great energy and songs that get stuck in your head are of course one thing, but it's also about their attitude. In Finland it has been hard to find a rock-band
without lyrics full of melancholy and broken hearts, luckily this is already getting better by now. They are touring a lot and that is important - it's little bit depressing if your favourite band has two gigs in two years or so. They are not getting boring, I saw every gig of their Finnish tour last autumn and I wasn't disappointed - I still think why should I stay home when I know that there is hell of a party somewhere. When I compare Santa Cruz and other bands I like or that I've liked, they are maybe younger and louder than others. It just fits with my hating of 8-16-life. Maybe after few years it will be more about awesome memories of stupid youth. After 103 Santa Cruz gigs, they still have the same energy and same power to bring the party in the middle of boring Finnish people. I'm already waiting for the summer festivals - but maybe this all is more about me being crazy than band being good, who knows?

**How did the growing popularity of social media influence the fans' behaviour?**

Getting the information is really easy - you can find everything: tour dates, songs, photos etc. just by opening Facebook. Sharing songs or videos and finding new bands or people with the same taste of music is so easy that you just have to pick the best ones. All the actors, writers and band members have also become closer to their fans because they are sharing their everyday-moments and thoughts in social media. I think that's why there is not this "mysterious artist"- thinking anymore. It's difficult to say that someone is your “God” when you have just seen a Snapchat video where he is eating a hangover pizza.

I think that how bands are represented in social media affects quite much how people see them. People like me want to get the information and also share it - that's why fans have become very useful.
Appendix 2. Interview Torsti Mäkinen, 11.04.2016

You are already a few years familiar with the Finnish Music Business: How much did it change in the past years?

We started about 10 years ago and that was sort of the time for the bands. Many quite popular bands touring Finland and nowadays I feel some of the most successful bands have grown bigger than anything ever in Finland but the middle class bands – like we used to be – have gotten very small. So, there are the huge bands and then there are the small bands who try to get some money out of the gigs. But it is not that easy. And for the venues: there is not like even 50% left that it used to be back when we were touring.

How did these changes influence the live music business?

Well, I know many musicians from Tampere and Helsinki. And there is not too much need for live musicians at the moment because of the rise of the electronical and HipHop music. That has also influenced how much artists get paid for the gigs because two rappers tour with a smaller car and one DJ. Unlikely we are a 6-member band and then we have technicians and we need a big car. It has changed quite a lot.

How important is it for an artist to work with a booking agent?

Unless you are a very, very good business man and keen on doing the hard work all the agencies do, you really need one. I am bad in selling myself; I am bad in selling anything. We definitely need one. And of course the contacts and arranging all the stuff involving touring, it takes quite a lot of time. For us it has been very important.

When did you decide to get a booking agent?

Probably when our agent asked us if we would like to be signed by them. We didn’t have any contacts for the venues around Finland, so we definitely needed one and we wanted one right away.
In what stage was your career when you got a booking agent?

It was pretty much in the beginning. We started around 2004 when all the band members got together and we made a demo quite soon after that. And with the first demo we already got the record deal and stuff like that. So, it came quite soon after we started making music seriously with this band.

What were the most important criteria while choosing the booking agency/agent?

Well for us it has been easy because our booking agency is from the same town. So, it is easy to do meetings and talk about stuff and see each other and work with all the posters and merchandise.

What do you expect from a good agent?

That he/she knows the band, knows their audience and makes the band grow bigger.

What are future goals for your career and how does your booking agent support you with that?

Our future goals at this time are to go abroad - bigger than ever before. We have a manager in Germany at the moment and that is what we are hoping to achieve with new music coming out soon. So far all the stuff abroad has worked out fine and our agent in Finland has done a great collaboration with the agencies outside of Finland.

How did your career developed since you have a booking agent?

We started gaining popularity at the same time when we got signed to our agency. So we sort of grown together. When we didn’t have an agency we only did a few shows in Tampere and that’s about it.
Why did you choose an independent agency?

It felt like a good option at this moment. And of course in the beginning they wanted to see what will come out of us and we wanted to see how we would work together. I have no complaints, so it has been good.

What does your agency offer you what you probably won’t get from any other agency?

South-African/Finnish agent! I think that’s at least one. I remember the time when Rowan was touring with us and sometimes when we were heading back home in the tour bus, we were singing traditional Finnish songs. And we were singing the national anthem. Pretty soon after that I said „Now let’s sing the national anthem for Rowan!“ [sings „The Lion Sleeps Tonight“] I cannot see us doing this with any other agent.
Tell a bit about your company and about yourself!

I am Janne. I have been a musician all my life. Five years ago I decided to have a day job. This was like the other end of the line: playing shows and booking shows for other bands. I have done this now for 5 years and back then I asked Elina – who is an agent here in Live Nation – “Do you need an agent?” And after two weeks I was working here! I was lucky in that sense. I know a lot of people, and all those connections are important in this business. It was somehow natural for me.

Live Nation is originally an American company. It has used to be “Well Done”, a Finnish booking agency. But then Live Nation bought “Well Done” and that’s how Live Nation came to Finland. This was maybe 10 – 15 years ago. I am not too sure. But we are the biggest booking agency and we import the biggest shows to Finland.

It is a good job. I don’t see Live Nation as a foreign company because we are Finnish – and a couple of English speaking – people working in here. These are my work friends and of course it is an international company but I still feel like it is a domestic thing because we work together in here (Finland). I don’t have to answer to London - which is the nearest agency head quarter beside America. We get some E-Mails from there but I am only taking care about domestic bands and the domestic market. So, for me it is still a Finnish company.

When and why did you decide to become a booking agent?

This is my first real day job ever! I have been living from music all my life and we started as a recording artist when I was 18. That’s a long time ago. And then I got tired of that! I decided to move on and maybe have a bit more relaxed way of life. But it is not more relaxing. It can be quite stressful at times but I like the atmosphere. And I get to be in the same business I love. That’s how it started. I’ve made plans what kind of knowledge I have and what can I offer to which kind of companies; so I thought it is maybe a record company or a booking agency. And the way record companies are struggling at the moment; I thought that I am not the one to save them! So, booking agency came like a natural choice for me. I didn’t even ask anybody else than Live Nation. It hasn’t even been the plan to go to Live Nation. It went all accidentally and there I was.
You are working in the Finnish Music Business: How did the Finnish Music Business change in the past 5 years? How has it been back then and how is it now?

It has changed definitely. Maybe I start a little bit further way back than 10 years. When I started it was really not professional. It was quite something else. It was a nice hobby for everybody. There were just a few people and if you knew a couple of people, you knew everybody. Marketing and everything was really easy because there were just a couple of magazines. And that was it.

Nowadays it is much more spread. I think the change started something like 10 – 15 years ago. And of course when it goes the more professional way, they do things properly and things get better. But in the same time, you loose something. Because it GETS more professional, the fun stuff gets away and people are getting older. Of course there are more people coming – as you are – and you will get to have parties and fun while working. But while people get older they tend to go home after work and don’t go to clubs anymore and all that drops away. We need fresh blood to have this “chaos” going on and still make good business. And I think that’s how it should be done. You must to do your job properly and do all the things well but you still have to keep this little sparking. You have to do something else than going to a normal job.

How did these changes influence the Live Music Business and the work of a booking agent?

I think the fees are going higher all the time. And now the times are quite bad. There is this recession and people don’t have so much money to spend. There is always this fight against how you spend your free time: playing video games or watching Youtube and Netflix. You are fighting for people’s time! That’s the challenge to get people to clubs and make them see live shows. It was whole different back then because there was no competition of free time.

And when people don’t have so much money; I think the fees cannot go any higher. You have to play with these fees and play along with clubs. You cannot ask for a fee from a club, which it cannot effort to pay. That’s bad business. You can charge for one time but that’s it then! (laughs)
Where do you see the position of an agent in nowadays music industry?

Well, the best thing is of course doing it alongside with a record company. You play together, you have your schedule and everything is planned a year ahead. So, you know all the releasing schedules and you can rely on that. I think it is as important as much as a record company is. It is 50/50.

Also building new careers: you always have some kind of sense of what is happening. And if you lose that, you will lose everything because you cannot just always take the most famous bands and sell them. You have to find new bands as well! So, with some bands, you maybe feel that you want to take it further. Maybe that is also something, which has to do with management. You figure out some ways to make something different and the artists get new ways to play the show: some location or whatever. And make them more visible. I think that is the key because you cannot force-feet anyone to anything. You have to have people who are interested in the band and make it happen that people are aware that this band exists.

Booking agencies in Finland: on one hand major agencies, on the other independent agencies. You are working in a major agency. What differs a major agency from an independent agency?

Well, money! Let’s start with money. Of course we have the back pockets full of money! (laughs) Bigger is better in some ways. And in some other ways independent agencies are better. Some other companies are quicker and easier to move. They can react to new things more swiftly and bigger agencies are like a bigger box. They turn a bit more slowly! But of course we are people. So, it is not the company, it is the people. We can also react pretty fast.

The difference, I’ve meant with the money: I know that some companies are struggling with money because it is possible that if a tour goes really bad, it can be the end of the company. We don’t have those problems ourselves! This is always a relief. It doesn’t take people’s life if something goes like that. But of course we have to make some money as well. It is our business.
What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

I think I’ve already answered that in some ways: because we have some money. If I want to do something special with my artist, I can do it! There is something reserved and we will get it back from somewhere else. We will make some more shows and we will spend some more money for this or that. So, I am safe in that way. That is not always the case with smaller companies! And I understand that they have to invent different kind of things. That is a good thing for sure.

We also have a big marketing and all of our artists are insured. If they don’t get paid from the clubs for a reason, we always give our artists the fee. So, then it is our responsibility to get the money from the club. That’s an advantage of being in a big company. Disadvantages as a company: *a big boat turns slowly*. The changes in the company are more slowly. The CEO has to talk to London or America. I am sure this must be very tiring at some times. At least it is a challenge. But it doesn’t affect me in my work. From my side, it is no disadvantage.

What do you offer the artist what another agency cannot offer?

Maybe I answered that also. We have back-up money from the start. We can build the career with the trust that we get the money back at some point and the artist and the honeypot will grow because we invest some money for that.

And also the insurance thing: I think we are the only agency, which does that. But of course I hope we don’t have to collect the money from somebody. But I think it happened couple of times. Last summer, I guess, there was a festival what didn’t pay for any band. There are still some weird people doing some weird business here in Finland. But mostly we are doing business with people we know. So, it is not that problematic. But still of course, if this happens, we pay the fee to the artist and it is our responsibility to fight the money back.

Is their any competition between the agencies in the Finnish Music Business? How did the competition change in the past 5 years?

I think it got better. What I understood, there was a huge competition between Live Nation and Fullsteam. But I know all the people from Fullsteam and we are good friends
with their agents. If there is competition, it is a healthy competition. We don’t try to stab ourselves in the back all the time.

Finland is such a small country. Backstabbing is something you will notice sooner or later. If you play bad business, it might be that you don’t do any business anymore. Of course there are hard players and if you have the best names maybe you can do it as long as you have the best names. But after that it is maybe harder.

Your work as an agent: What is a good booking agent? Name some criteria!

Connections; of course. You have good connections to clubs and restaurants. And if you have good connections, people want to do business with you! You have to be honest. Keep your word: if you have a reserved date, you will do it or let it go in an early stage. So, you don’t keep it for nothing. Promoters trust you. If you call them, you have something good to offer! Then you have to keep the artists interesting. You should have the right fee – not the highest fee because you have to do a good co-operation with the promoters. For myself the next gig is always as important as the current one. You always have to have the next step already in mind.

You have to do all the settlements and all that! I hate that but Excel is my friend! (laughs) And, of course you have to have some kind of plan with every band. You know where you are going with it and with every band you have a different plan.

How important is experience for being a good agent? How did experiences develop yourself in the past?

Experience is important. But this is some kind of work you learn while doing. You get to know people and you get slowly better gigs and bands in your roster. I don’t think there is any school where you can learn to be an agent! Of course you have to have some kind of sense of music business. I think that has been my advantage as I have such a long experience as a musician and producer and this was just another feather in my head.

But definitely I’ve developed in the past years. I understand now what I am doing. I had to do a tour for Anssi Kela – it was the 10 years anniversary for his first record – and this tour was my first “assignment”. And it was fun having a specific tour and not only selling weekend gigs. And I got to know everything about being an agent – as I also did
the whole production by myself. And of course I am a musician, I know about all the things like busses, hotels, pa-systems and lights. So, it is a natural knowledge for me. It wasn’t that hard to learn as I know what it takes to play a concert! It is a familiar world for me. And as a person who doesn’t have a clue about that, maybe it is hard or even impossible to start from zero. It is really difficult to start from the scratch and you don’t know anything about how the world where bands “live” works. It is not the easiest job but it is also not rocket sciences.

You cannot say it is very easy because otherwise they wouldn’t pay me that much but still you have to do certain things for every show. You have to remember to do them and of course for every mail you send, you will get two back. And sure, it is on going and every situation is different and there are some problems you have to solve and all that. But still it is not rocket sciences – but you have to know the world and I think that is the main thing.

 Mostly the artist has a team of experts around him/her: Do you think the booking agent can be the one who helps to develop an artist the most?

I don’t know if you can say the most. But I would say together with the record company and the management. Of course you can do your job well but it is not fruitful. Maybe you miss something because you don’t have a specific connection. I think those three components are even-stand.

 How influential are booking agents for the career of an artist?

Of course it is very important that you are active and you have a good imagination what to do next and what is the next step. You plan one or two years ahead. You should see further because then you can push the artist. And if you like those elements, you can help the artist definitely. Take artists to weird places and think a bit outside of the box. I think this is very important.

You don’t do always the same tours and weekends! Fullsteam’s Ari Koskinen is doing a great job with the planning and how they did for instance the Stamina shows. They did the normal venues and then they did only the biggest venues and then they only did the very small clubs until now where they are playing only arenas. So, it is easy to see that there is good planning and that’s what I respect very much.
How many bands do you have in your roster and what kind of bands?

I have 10 bands in my roster. They range from Finnish pop music, Anssi Kela, to English spoken punk-garage-country music. I don’t have one genre but still I would say the combining red line for me: it has something to do with rock music or instruments. No rap or Hip Hop. I don’t know that world pretty well that I could take rappers to my roster.

What are requirements for you to book a new artist?

It has to be interesting for me. I feel that I want to work with the artist. And I feel that there is a commercial potential and that they can grow and I can help with that. Because if some of these things do not apply to a new act, I don’t want to take it. Even if there is the biggest band in Finland, you want to have that artist and you have to work hard with that artist!

And you have to like the artist’s music and the person. There should be also something where you can still take the artist because if it is already the biggest artist, what can you still do with the artist? They can only come down and you can also helping with that. (laughs)

What are the reasons for you to cut off bands from your roster?

If nothing is happening for a couple of years. And I always tell the bands that if they want me to be the agent, you should sell your own gigs as long as possible. They want to push it as much as they can and they have all the time. Even if they say they don’t have time, they probably have more time than I have. If there is a good connection to the record company and I feel that this is going somewhere, then it is time for them to have a booking agent. If they want to be more active by themselves, I would say, it is time for you to try something else out with a different person – because it is not in my interest that I keep bands that don’t have any shows with me. They can try another person who does a better job than I do. And it is very important that you realize yourself with certain bands that you are not the right person for THAT band. This doesn’t mean you are not doing your job properly but something is missing.
Do you have a role model in the music business for your work?

Actually I have a few. I respect Atte Blom who started Love Records and then Mikko Karmila, with who we recorded with Stone when I started my career. He has been a great person in that sense that he is always interested in new things and I respect that very much.

Kari Pössi who was our booking agent with Suburban Tribe from 2000 until the end in 2011. I think he is a good example for a good agent and he is very likeable and not too greedy. I respect that. And from the younger generation, I respect Ari Koskinen very much. All these things apply to him as well. Not too greedy and nice personality.

How do you see the role of booking agents in the Finnish Music Business in the next 5 years? Which of your activities will be changing?

Of course I hope that the climate and the economical situation in Finland gets better. But I think things are going to the better direction; in that sense that even if the competition is hard, it is a fair competition. And you have to do a good work with the clubs. The fee is right and not too high; and also clubs want to pay if they can. It is a question of balance and I guess the balance will get better all the time. That’s how I see it. I think the live music business is doing very nice and good. Maybe it is because of me that I want to be friends with everybody, but I think it is very important that you have good connections and relationships with everybody. People get to know each other better all the time; it makes things better and healthier!
Tell a bit about your company and about yourself!

We have a company called NEM agency, which is an agency and promotion company in Tampere. We organize festivals and book shows as an agent for domestic bands in Finland and for foreign bands in Finland. We do basically everything, which has anything to do with live music. And nothing, which has anything to do with record labels.

When and why did you decide to become a booking agent?

I decided to become a booking agent by accident. I wanted to become a DJ. So, I started DJing at a youth centre when I was like 14 years old. And then one day there was a band playing when I was supposed to DJ, which pissed me off. But then I noticed that the band has really cool equipment: sound console and all these cool kind of stuff. So, I decided I want to be a sound guy. I loaned some money from my dad and I bought all the sound equipment.

But then I had the sound equipment but nobody to rent the sound equipment to. So, I started working with some bands. But they needed gigs that I could rent them my equipment and so I started booking them gigs around Finland so I can be their sound guy. Later on it turned around: now I only do sound because I want to and I book shows because that's what I do.

You are working in the Finnish Music Business: How did the Finnish Music Business change in the past 5 years? How has it been back then and how is it now?

Good question. I think the Finish music business has become more professional in a lot of ways. I think especially domestic Finish bands have decided to be more professional and a lot more bands are only concentrating on being a band. Where it has been before everybody worked and then the band was a hobby. Back then there have been only a few, where it seems now to be more and more professional bands. And I think also because of the fact that there's a lot more bands being brought into Finland and a lot more bands being exported from Finland. That everything's changed and it started running a little bit more like central Europe.
I think another thing that has changed a lot is the amount of domestic bands that can play big arena shows. Like 5/6 years ago, no band could play Hartwall Arena – unless they have been Nightwish. Where's now, Haloo Helsinki is playing Hartwall Arena; JVG, Elastinen, Kaija Koo and all these big domestic bands are able to do big shows. That's definitely something that has been changed and also the fact that there's a lot more international bands playing Finland.

**How did these changes influence the Live Music Business and the work of a booking agent?**

Well I'm not too sure that any of this really influenced the way how we booked tours. We still do it the same way. The biggest thing is that when booking tours, we have to take artist production into our thoughts a lot more because along with the bands becoming more professional they also want to put up bigger shows. So, we need to think more closely where we book them, make sure that the technical stuff is up-to-date and the venues can host the band with a big production. And also I think a lot of venues have become more specific. Where else before they were only a couple of venues per city and they’ve booked everything, I think now there's a lot more venues who just want to book certain kind of music.

I think because of the whole digital age things have changed. Before we mostly did the bookings by phone. Today there's E-mail, social media and then „Artist Exchange“. So, I think booking shows became more digital, not so much personal. But I don't think anything else has changed super much in the last five years - for us at least.

**Where do you see the position of an agent in nowadays music industry?**

I see the position of an agent being the same position as it has been the last couple of years. Every band needs a good agent. If you have a good agent, you play better festivals, you get better gigs and you will normally get more money. I do know a lot of bands who have tried - because of all this digital age – it is a lot more easier to send E-mails to promoters or whatever. A lot of bands have tried and most of the bands have failed.

The booking agency: of course the venues trust us, and they are used to buying from us. And they know when they get stuff from us; we do the production properly. They get
the posters on time, we help them with the social media promotion and I find that a lot of venues are hesitant booking an artist outside from this. And then also the bands need us because most of the bands don't have an own company. They need us to help to take care about invoicing and do the book keeping and make sure everybody gets their salary, day money and the „kilometre money“. So, a booking agent is very essential to run things efficiently and make sure that everything is done by the book as well.

**Booking agencies in Finland: on one hand major agencies, on the other independent agencies. You are working in an independent agency. What differs your agency from a major agency?**

Yes, we are one of the few independent agencies. And it does make things more difficult because 6 - 7 years ago there was only Live Nation as a major agency. Now Sony has an agency, Warner Music has one, FKP Scorpio & Fullsteam. So, I guess difficult for us is especially finding new domestic talents because a lot of those bands sign with Warner or Sony and their booking agency deals are connected with the record label. It means: if you want to have a record deal you automatically sign an agency deal. So, it does make it more difficult for us and of course when you have a major agency they has more money while we have to take care of each and every show, each and every case and each and every artist seriously. And we really need to think do we have the money to do it. But on the other hand: with us being a small and independent agency, it is one of our strengths. We can offer more personal contact with the bands, we can do everything on a personal level and the bands don't have to think there's somebody in the background just thinking about money and record sales. We can do everything more on a personal level and I think with us being an independent agency, it is also good for some bands: like a punk band on Warner Music would never work. We do a lot of punk and metal and stuff like that. But of course it's hard and it does make the competition as bigger.

**What are your weaknesses?**

What are our weaknesses? Our weaknesses are definitely involved with World music, Ethno music. We are terrible with electronic music. There's nobody in our company who really knows what to do with electronic music; electronic pop yes but House music
and Dubstep and stuff like that, we are really bad with that. But without sounding any overweening, on a general level we do our job very well and we are very strong in what we do. But maybe yes, electronic stuff and that is not really our thing.

**What do you offer the artist what another agency cannot offer?**

That is a good question. That depends on the band. If it is a metal band, we bring a lot more to the table then many agencies because we're specialized in that. We have our own metal-festivals, we work with so many metal promoters and productions that I think for metal band we are very strong just because of the contacts we have. The same with rock music and Suomi rock music. Because we have big artists like Kolmas Nainen, Turmion Kätilöt or Amaranthe. And because we have those big artists, we can also help to push small artists through supports lots and through our festivals and stuff like that. We don’t have that many pop, electro or Hip Hop bands anyway. So that is definitely one of our strengths. And I think we are a trusted agency. The agency has only been under my control the last four years but NEM has been around since 1987. So, there's a lot of promoters who worked with the company for three decades and they know that they can trust us.

**Is their any competition between the agencies in the Finnish Music Business? How did the competition change in the past 5 years?**

Oh there's always competition. I mean Finland is a small place, 5,5 million people. There's apparently 100,000 bands and only a few decent bands who can actually make out of this living. So, there's a big competition between every agency. Everybody is after every band and sometimes bands change agencies. But I think between agencies - when it comes to domestic bookings - we are pretty open. I often call other agencies and ask their ideas and opinions. We share a lot of information between each other because it is such a small market and I think it is important that we work together. But then of course when we are doing international acts - because this is even a smaller market - we tend to be a lot more secret about what we do and try to protect our own little area. I think it has become a little bit more open in the couple of last years between the agencies. But we tend to work together and share a lot of information - at least we do.
Your work as an agent: What is in your opinion a good booking agent? Name some criteria!

A good booking agent is confident. A good booking agent is social. A good booking agent can also be direct but also has a sensitive side. I guess being direct with your artist is important. It is very important to keep the artists up to-date about what is happening. Let them know their weaknesses. A good agent is also able to tell his or her hit band when to not do gigs. That's something, which can be very difficult when you have a band, which brings a lot of money. It is your job to keep the band touring but at some stage is really important to know when to stop and to tell the band when they shouldn't do shows. When they should do an album or take a break. And also to have the guts to discuss it with the record label and say your direct opinion.

It is important to get on very well with your customers, understand each band separately. Every band has a weakness; every band has a plus. There are different people in the band and you need to learn how to be sensitive and appreciative of the different people in the band. It is important that your artist always feels that you love them and you really do care what's going on but also keep a certain kind of authority with the band. They should respect you and understand you. If you have an opinion, they should take it seriously. And of course it helps if you love the music.

How important is experience for being a good agent? How did experiences develop yourself in the past?

Well of course any kind of experience is good for an agent because there's just certain things when you're booking a show you might know which venues are better or worse. You can foretell certain mistakes the bands will make in advance because you have been to the venue before. Experience of course helps you make new customers and get to know the venues. When you are experienced you are also know the media a lot better. You have more contacts everywhere. So, of course with experience things have become easier and and better and I will be able to do a better job.

But I think a good agent doesn't necessarily have to have big experience. Because if you find the right bands and if your band is interesting, you'll always be able to sell it and you will be able to book a tour. I think experience just makes things a little bit easier and the chance for error is a bit smaller.
Mostly the artist has a team of experts around him/her: Do you think the booking agent can be the one who helps to develop an artist the most?

It depends on the band. It depends on the agent and it depends on the music. And it depends in what the agent is into.

Normally the band has a manager - they should have a manager. And the manager is the one who kinds of develops the band the most. He needs to be the one who knows in which direction to take the band and get the right people working around the band. A lot of the times there's a false consumption that the agent is the mother of the band or the father and the agent needs to take care about everything. I think it is important that the agent is given the possibility to work on booking the shows and tours and not screwing around with everything else in the background.

I think the manager is the more important person when it comes to developing the band as a product. But of course an agent should get involved. He should say if the band is something not doing right live and should be involved in everything. But I would say the manager and the record label should take care about that stuff and the agent is the one who develops them through the live business. But of course when you have a small band you get involved with everything.

How influential are booking agents for the career of an artist?

Can be if the band gets on a big agency. An unsigned band might be able to get the record deal little bit more easy if they have a big agent. Especially if you have a big agent, who books you to Europe. Then it is so much easier to get a record deal. If you want to play the UK and you have a big UK agent, you are likely to get a record deal much easier. But yeah, a good agent can bring good things. But then again if you are small band and you get in a big agency. It could also work against you as well. If you have a big agent who is booking big gigs, he doesn't have necessarily the time to put into your small band.

How many bands do you have in your roster and what kind of bands?

I book 18 domestic artists at the moment and I work with 40-50 international artists in Finland. But of course each band is not active at the same time. So I generally have
around six domestic bands and 10 to 15 international bands that I'm working on through a certain period. I book very broadly. I have a lot of metal: Turmion Kätilöt, Barren Earth, Korpiklaani, Profane Omen. I work with a Jimi Hendrix kind of world music thing called „Roots Of Love“ where they are taking Jimi Hendrix music and they totally modernized it. I work with Antero Lindgren who is singer-songwriter. I work with Lovex which is a pop rock band. I work with Miljoonasade which is formed in the 80s and a Finnish singing Suomi Rock band. I work with Pauli Hanhiniemi who is from Kolmas Nainen. International bands we do all kinds from Amaranthe which is heavy to Captain Jack which is a 90s artist to the Ukulele Orchestra where guys playing Ukulele. Lee Scratch Perry which is reggae and dub. Rotten Christ which is black metal. So, I do all kinds of stuff. I wouldn't say that I specialize exactly in anything but of course I think I land up more in doing metal then anything else but I think it is also because Finland is a metal country.

What are requirements for you to book a new artist?

I need to like the music. A lot of times I sign an artist just because of my musical taste - in the hope one day the band will become big. It helps if they have a decent record deal. It helps if they are in the radio. It helps if I know they play shows, which have a great attendance. It definitely helps because at the end we would love every show to be sold out. Their social media presence; if the band works really hard on social media, so I know that they at least try to make sure to sell tickets. Of course when you have a band starting out, I cannot expect them to sell every gig out or even sell 50 tickets. But if the band has a strong social media presence: so, if the gig goes bad, I can always turn around to the venue promoter and say at least they've tried. So, that is really important for me.

What are the reasons for you to cut off bands from your roster?

Well if they do not do anything. If they haven't released anything; that is one reason. If I find we are not getting on socially or if the chemistry between us is not good. Then that's a reason why I might tell a band to consider working with someone else. If I don't have time to work with them because I have to much other stuff. That is one reason. If a band is too needy; if they take up too much of my time on everything other that has
nothing to do with show booking. Or if they call me at 10 o'clock in the evening to tell me that he just wrote a new song. So, if they are too needy and take a way too much time in comparison to the amount of shows they do and the amount of money they bring in. That would be a big criteria. And also if they are just being assholes. But I mean most of the bands that I've worked with for years, I get along very well with my artists. But those might be maybe the biggest reasons.

**Do you have a role model in the music business for your work?**

Yeah, I have a lot of role models. I don’t know if I have a role models based on the people. But there's a lot of people I admire in the industry. And there's a lot of people I follow and I try to learn stuff from. I think there's a lot of companies which I use as a role model – watching the way they work with their artist or that kind of shows they do. I wouldn't say I have a certain role model but I have a lot of people I admire. And I have a lot of people I tried to learn from. When I started back in the days my role model was Peve, the sound guy. Back in 2002 I was 15 and I started working with him and he was my super big role model. And through him I learnt a lot and I have met a lot of people. Through that I've met Harri Karvinen and I started working at NEM. But I think I admire a lot of people and I try to learn from them. If I would be a manager, I would admire Amaranthe’s manager Thomas Engström. He is an amazing 65-69 year old dude. Long beard. I admire his beard. And just the way he works and just the way he is able to express himself really nicely. And he motivates me every time when something is happening with Amaranthe. He just has this amazing charismatical way of motivating me to do stuff. So, if I would one day to become manager, I would definitely base it on him.

**How do you see the role of booking agents in the Finnish Music Business in the next 5 years? Which of your activities will be changing?**

I don't see the role changing that much. I think it's pretty standard at the end what a booking agent needs to do and what he does. In terms of our company and our strategy, we gonna end up promoting more shows ourselves, organizing more events, bigger festivals hopefully. But in terms of just show booking: I don’t think it is going to change that much. The only thing that is difficult is that a lot of venues are going through tough
financial times with the whole depression and the government taxing absolutely every-
thing. So, I think what might change is the venues where we book shows and who we
sell to. And I think a lot of cities gonna change when they start losing the big major live
venues. Hopefully that will turn around and if it does I don't think much will change.
Hopefully we will get a lot more cool bands.
Appendix 5. Interview Noora Louhimo, 13.03.2016

You are already a few years familiar with the Finnish Music Business: How much did it change in the past 5 years? What kind of changes have you seen?

Well, that’s a tough question. I think the music business is going forward all the time and especially now that we are having this new generation which is more and more interested in the music business. There is more professional people coming in. Especially in the practical stuff: arranging events or doing some festivals. It’s been better and better each year.

But on the other side, there have been some festivals: they haven’t been developing. But I don’t know what is the reason for that. Most of my experiences have been that people are developing their skills in this business. And yeah. I don’t know what else to say.

How did these changes influence the Live Music Business?

Especially now when streaming is the thing, live music comes in as a very, very important part for artists and bands; because it is almost the only way to get actually the money or sell your CD’s. People don’t buy so much music from stores as an album. So, I think live music and live shows are the most important thing nowadays. Actually people should really think about it when they want to get their band or some artist forward in their careers. Not necessarily trying to put so much effort on the CD’s. The future is going that way that people only listen music from the internet and what the money comes from are the live shows.

How important is it for an artist to work with a booking agent?

Well, it is easier that way. What I have noticed is that most of artists are not necessarily a selling person who have this skill to sell their own product. So, I think agencies are very important in that way because they know what to do and how to sell the product. The artist is the product. Most of the artists need agencies. It makes it easier for the artist just to concentrate on the real job that they have. And this is developing themselves as musicians and their own music; and doing the music the best way they can and of course developing their own live shows. So, I think booking agencies are a really important part in this business.
When and how did you decide to get a booking agent?

In Battle Beast case, I don’t actually know the history because I came in in the middle. I think, in that point when you actually have that need that you have this case that more and more show as are coming up or you don’t have shows and you need help with that. And of course it is also this kind of status thing - image thing - that when you have a booking agency behind you, most of the venues take you more seriously than if you try to sell your own gigs like „Hello, could you take us?“ But I think it depends also who is doing the selling. Many bands can do their own selling also; but when and how? I think when you don’t have the skills or anyone selling the gigs in the band, then you need to have a booking agency. I think even though you are a big name or not, it is very useful because booking agencies have their own percentages of the income and it helps the both sides. I think many bands or artists should take that example that they could actually agency even though they are not a big band. Because the agency can make you bigger just by selling more gigs and then you get your name around when you have more shows.

In what stage was your career when you got a booking agent?

(talking now about NOEX) Well, I had been singing in Battle Beast like 2,5 years and then I decided that my own solo band should need some kind of help with the selling. But actually these past six months I have been doing all the selling. I didn’t have to sell so much because there has been so many people just taking contact to me and asking if I could come and do a show. It has been pretty easy right now. But I think it is very useful anyways to have someone helping you. Especially in the areas, where I don’t have so good relations yet - like outside Tampere. So, in that case I think DragonWhite Agency is really useful.

What were the most important criteria while choosing the booking agency/agent?

My criteria was that I trust the person and I had been asking around from this particular agency’s customers - other artists - like what did they think about this agency and how had this cooperation been going on. Is it good? What is bad? I think trust is the most important thing with the agency. And easy going – that I can actually get along with the
agency people. So, I think this kind of chemistry between people in every business is important.

**What kind of activities do you expect from a good agent?**

Well, that you have a communication between the agency and yourself because if you don’t get contact when you need, it makes things more difficult and it effects many people around you. Not just the band but the people who are working around the band. So, I think communication is the most important thing and it should work well. And of course talking about communication involves the dates for the shows. It is not always depending on the agency. If they have some kind of offers in to some venues and the local promoter doesn’t give you the information you need in time – even though you have been asking around like „Can I have the information sheets and everything?“. It is always a different case. Of course if you know the local promoter and know how they work it is more easy and you know what to expect and so on. But when it is someone you don’t know then you just have to wait and see what’s gonna happen. But I think when we go to this issue between agencies and other venues and the local promoters, the trust is very important in that area also. So that you can actually trust that the promoter will do their jobs back at the place where you gonna have the show. Bad cases have been: we have gone to some show and there is actually no advertising. Like you don’t see any posters anywhere and most of the people don’t know that you are actually playing there. But then in the best cases the promoting has been awesome when we come there. People actually care that we come there and not just like „I don’t care if you are here or not!“ And everything in the riders is well organized. I think it is very important in any event - like was it in a little pub or big festival - that there is someone who is actually doing the decisions and organizing and having someone taking care of the band when they arrive. Because there has been some experiences of that also that there is no one actually you can ask like „Where is the backstage?“ or „Where is the rider? Well, then let’s go to some little store and have some beer and water!“ So, the situation leaves a lot.
What are future goals for your career and how does your booking agent support you with that?

Well our manager who is also the main booking agent in Master Events, is really supporting. Now when we were actually last Friday at Hammerfest he sent us a long text message with this kind of preptalk like „I love you guys! You are the best!“. There was some stuff with our release of our next album and he was just really pumped up about it. So, I think Kari Penttinen is really supportive but very busy also. We don’t always or never see behind the scenes – what is going on when the manager is doing their jobs and they don’t need to report to the artist like „Okay, now I am doing this and now I am doing that“.. Because there is so many stuff to take care of. What bands and artists should understand is: even though you are not getting reports all the time, there are actually things happening behind the scenes. So, I think it has been really good.

How did your career developed since you have a booking agent?

Of course with Battle Beast it’s totally necessary to have a booking agent and we have actually different booking agencies. We have the main booking agency Master Events where Kari is taking care of all the shows in Finland and being the main contact between the promoters around the world; like NB Touring that is a side company of Nuclear Blast is doing our European Shows. Heiko Krumphold from NB Touring is our booking agent to Europe. And then we have also in Japan a different promoter. Kari’s job is to be in contact with them and I hope everything will be alright. But what was the question? Actually it has been developing up the hill all the time because now that we have NB Touring with us they will gather the tours to us. And then Kari is the one who is doing the tours in Finland and to Sweden and Norway. So, more there is people helping, the more you get shows and more you get fans and visibility. The feeling that I have right now is that our career is really going forward and actually it hasn’t stopped in any point. It’s been really smooth going up the stairs. Of course there have been a lot of things that’s been happening. But that’s life. And of course there has been stuff that has been really depressing „Are we gonna survive?“. But we actually have been survived it. It has been the most rewarding thing and feeling we have had. So, I think our careers have been developing a lot working with the booking agency.
Why did you choose an independent agency?

I don’t know the reason actually but it’s all about the people relations. Like Kari who found Battle Beast when no one else knew about the band, no one else believed in the band back in the days 2008. He was the one who actually put the band in the circles and still is believing in us totally. It came naturally. I think in any case there is usually this thing: there is always some person which gets actually excited about some band and even themselves wanna be booking agents or they know someone who can be that perfect agent or good possibility for that. It usually goes in that way or then bands just send their demos to a booking agency and try their luck. But I think it is all usually going between peoples relations and finding out through some friends „Hey, this is a really good band!“.

What are the strengths of an independent agency? What are the weaknesses?

Strengths: that we can really have a close relationship with the agent and that you can call Kari almost at any time of the day hour. And of course that I trust him. That is the biggest thing. He is still believing in us and that's the most important thing. But then the weaknesses could be: he's not only our agent. He is the producer of „Raskasta Joulua“ and he's a very busy with that also. I don't know what else artist he has. But anyway sometimes he's really overbooked. So, sometimes it is hard to get connection. But now that I have doing this weekly connecting to him, it's been very well. He's replying and that sort of stuff. But sometimes when you don't know what's going on in his end, you are like „What's going on? Why can’t I reach him?“. But usually you can reach him and it's all fine.

What does your agency offer you what you probably won’t get from any other agency?

I don't know, I haven't been in any other agencies but these two. I haven't been working with DragonWhite for so long, so I don't really know yet, do I want to continue working with them. Because it's not only because of the booking agent. It's also my schedule with Battle Beast. Because first I have to know Battle Beast schedules; and then report them to DragonWhite and then come the problems to sell my own gigs. E.g. for next summer I cannot booked anything yet before I know that there's some certain days that I
don’t have Battle Beast shows, then I can book some shows for myself. Kari is not doing this for money. He's doing this for love in this music and for love to this band. Yeah, I think he got this similar kind of way that musicians have. Well, we are not millionaires and we really have to love to do this and be passionate about that. In Kari’s case: He is passionate and not just being some guy who gets paid. He actually loves to do his job.

You are already a few years familiar with the Finnish Music Business: How much did it change in the past 5 years? What kind of changes have you seen?

Well, I mean, you know when we started doing this – I wouldn’t say for a profession but anyway – when we started doing music full time, a lot of the big changes had been already happen. We were born into the scene that everything has already changed. You know, the situation with the music business that CD’s don’t sell etc. During the past three years we have been actively touring around Finland and Europe. I would say that the situation isn’t really as bad as some people might think. I think especially in Finland during the last couple of years, there have been so many new bands - like rock bands and metal bands that have been rising up and the fans just have been great. Because they have been helping us all the time. And you can see that steadily more and more people coming to gigs and supporting the band. Which is really cool. So, I would say only the big difference is just that people are actually supporting bands more and more in my opinion as the years go by.

How did these changes influence the Live Music Business?

Well, probably in a good way. I think our first gig was in 2011 and that was a show in the local youth centre. But we kept on and took every gig that we could possibly take. The audience was basically 3-4 of our good friends being like “Yeah, we gonna come to the show and support you!” Which is of course a good start for any band. And I mean, of course it motivates the bands a lot that now they can see that people come to see their shows. That’s definitely been one of the things.

It is also always a great thing if we go to Oulu, which is like 300-400 km far away. It really helps if we get there, we play the show and there is actually a shit load of people watching us. That of course motivates us when we come back to Jyväskylä, saying “Let’s go back! Let’s go back!” I mean it is really a quid pro quo situation that they crowd gives us a lot of stuff and we give the crowd a lot of stuff: energy and motivation.

How important is it for an artist to work with a booking agent?

It is a huge thing of course. But the cool thing is that nowadays – even if you are a
rooky band that has been playing for one year and you have a demo or one album out – it is actually possible for you – if you have the time and the willing to do it – to call the promoters, clubs and bars yourself and make a Finnish tour. I mean, it can happen. But obviously having a booking agent just makes the whole thing so much simpler because then you can focus on what you really want to do, which is playing music. So, basically it is just like a huge team of people, which just helps you out. They do everything that basically you just don’t have the time to do and obviously they do it a hundred times better. And we were lucky enough that we got in touch with Jouni Markkanen in a really early stage. We had released the first album and after releasing we noticed that we got really good reviews, we got a shitload of fans and I would say that it would definitely not have been possible for us to start booking shows ourselves and get to all the places that we wanted to go. So, we owe him so much - just for the fact that he got us the Overkill support tour at once after the album was released and he started getting us the festival appearances and everything. So, definitely it is really important for you to have a booking agent and a GOOD booking agent.

**When and how did you decide to get a booking agent?**

It was basically a kind of an accident. Because at the time - when the first record came out - we were at the stage where we didn’t know how the music business and the live music business actually works. We were just clueless. We were just four dudes who put out a record of music that we love to play. And we were just kids. We were like “Okay, so now we have a record out, guess now we gonna start touring!” And then we were like “Mh! How is this gonna happen?” Then we just noticed that we got an E-mail from KingFoo, what it was at this time. And Jouni was like “Hei, I would love to work with you guys!” And it happened really quickly. He came to Jyväskylä, we had a good chat with him and he started selling our shows. And we noticed that this is a really reliable and really fucking good working guy – and we need him. Ever since that it has just been amazing working with him and we owe him so much by the fact that he believed in us – even though if we only had one album out and had been playing maybe 20 gigs tops. Yeah, that’s really cool!
What were the most important criteria while choosing the booking agency/agent?

The thing with booking agents is that when you talk to them for the first time – when you have a meeting with them – you can see at once what the person is like. They have to be strict or they have to have the fact that they get shit done. But at the same time you gotta have the buddy effect: they are fun to work with, they are fun to hang out with. Because in the end of the day you know that you gonna be with them and working with them for a long time. So, I would say that the only criteria is that we needed a booking agent and we saw that he got stuff done because the first time he sent us an E-mail, he said “Hey, how about an Overkill tour and a gig in Tuska?” So we were like “Okay; that sounds pretty cool! You must be a good guy!” And I mean, he was a good guy and he is a good guy!

What do you expect from a good agent?

You have to have some results. If you are lucky, you get the booking agent at a very early stage in your career. So, they have to have the ability to market you in a very positive light to all of the promoters in the country you live in. He/She has to get you shows everywhere and just promote the shit out of you. I mean that is the most important thing. But then everything that lies beyond that: the band has to look good, when they go to a show in a bar you have to be nice to everyone and gotta play a good show and not fuck around. In that way too it is that the booking agent does the first bit and the biggest bit but then the rest is with you – the band!

What are future goals for your career and how does your booking agent support you with that?

We just came back from a five-week European tour a couple of days ago. That as itself tells a lot. It is always great when a record comes out that we can hit the road at once. And I mean the tour was amazing for us and now we are starting a two-month Finnish tour. And we are hitting the biggest and the best places for a band in our size. And after that we have festivals all over Finland, all over Europe and then for the autumn it is gonna be probably another European tour and stuff like that. We are going to Japan, we are going to Russia. So it has always been great. Now three albums out, we are still
working so well together with Greybeard and with Jouni and Samu. And we are just so grateful that they want to work with us. Of course we also understand the fact that when they get us these really great shows, we gotta do the best that we can and we obviously always do that!

**How did your career developed since you have a booking agent?**

Massively! As I was talking: the first shows we had were in youth centres. From that slowly onwards we went to the small bars around Jyväskylä and around middle Finland. We did some shows in Helsinki and then it just changed completely when we got the album out and we got Jouni on board. Then we started playing in places like Pakkahouse. We started doing shows all over Finland and playing in the biggest festivals in Finland. It changed everything for us in a very positive way.

**Why did you choose an independent agency?**

There is so much of that. There are independent labels, there are major labels, there is this and this and this. And to be honest: I honestly don’t know the difference of any of them! For me it is: Action speaks more than titles. Always! If you get stuff done and you are reliable and you do your work well - I don’t really care what you are: if you are an independent or a major or whatever. For us, everyone who helps us is a major help!

**What does your agency offer you what you probably won’t get from any other agency?**

The reliability; the backbone to everything. If we go to a show and we don’t have everything there what we need – which happens of course rarely in Finland – we can just call them and they will get the stuff done. And you know, one of the things is of course when you are dealing with shows and there is a certain fee that you are supposed to get. If you don’t have a booking agency then you will have to do the billing and all of this stuff, which we personally do not know anything about. We are bad with numbers, we have always been. Of course, this is one major help. They do everything that let’s us basically focus on just the music and just the thing that we are supposed to do.
Appendix 6. Interview Shiraz Lane, 18.03.2016

You are already a few years familiar with the Finnish Music Business: How much did it change in the past years? What kind of changes have you seen?

Ana: Well this is kinda hard to tell to be honest. We started this band 5 years ago but we didn’t know much about the music business itself because we weren’t in that state with the band. We were rehearsing in the garage and more on the ground level. Now since we have been able to check out the business side for only a year or two years, I cannot say if it has changed.

How important is it for an artist to work with a booking agent?

Joel: I guess it is good because we have so much stuff to do. What could I say? It has been quiet a bit at the moment but they are good in what they do and they can get us some shows we couldn’t get by ourselves.

Hannes: Yeah, as a band you can of course book some gigs for yourself but when you have a booking agent they get you to those festivals and all those bigger venues. You couldn’t go there without them.

Ana: They do it for living and then you can just focus on playing music.

Joel: That’s the best part.

Hannes: Yeah, it is supposed to be like that.

When and how did you decide to get a booking agent?

Joel: How did it happen?

Hannes: Well, we were thinking about it but we didn’t do anything about it. Then our manager just helped us out and a couple of guys from our booking agency saw us live. Then they wanted to work with us. So that’s how it happened. It sounds boring but is true.

Ana: We knew we needed a booking agency but we didn’t want to rush into anything. Like signing a contract with a bad booking agency. We pretty much just waited for this thing with Live Nation to happen.
In what stage was your career when you got a booking agent?

Ana: We had made our first EP “Be the Slave or Be the Change”.
Joel: And we knew that we are gonna sign a recording contract. And they knew it.
Ana: We were actually already writing the songs for the album.
Hannes: It was like 6 months ago.
Ana: In August.

What were the most important criteria while choosing the booking agency/agent?

Joel: Power!
Hannes: Yeah, they have power! They are worldwide and if there is some big artist coming here, we can go and warm-up for the artist because it is the same agency. That’s pretty much the main thing. Yeah, and it was the name. And if they want to work for you, you should be happy.

What kind of activities do you expect from a good agent?

Hannes: A good agent should be in contact with the band, book the gigs and be kind of be part of the crew; be part of the band, the whole family.
Ana: And believe in the band.
Hannes: Yeah, because if you all in only because of the money then you shouldn’t be a booking agent.

What are future goals for your career and how does your booking agent support you with that?

Hannes: Play as many gigs as possible. And support the upcoming album. Why wouldn’t you like to play gigs?
Joel: Make it as big as possible.
How did your career developed since you have a booking agent?

**Joel:** Not much because we haven’t done many shows booked by Live Nation because we were doing the album.

**Hannes:** Not much yet! That will change in the future.

**Ana:** Obviously it will get more and more serious. I mean you’re just not in control of everything yourself, so you need to be a bit accurate about everything.

**Hannes:** It is a bit scary not handle everything ourselves but at the same time this is how it is supposed to be.

**Ana:** It is relieving.

Why did you choose a major agency?

**Hannes:** I guess it is the same thing again. The possibilities are limit-less. If they want to support us, we will open for major big bands and tour.

**Ana:** And the agents who are working now with us have been friends with our manager for many, many years. So, we trust them more than we would trust just a random person.

What does your agency offer you what you probably won’t get from any other agency?

**Ana:** The possibilities for opening for big bands. In Finland Live Nation brings like 90% of every big concerts and big bands to do a gig here. I guess you cannot get any of those slots with any other agency than with Live Nation.
Tell a bit about your company and about yourself!

My company is called Greybeard Concerts & Management. I’ve been running it now approx. 1,5 years. Before that I’ve used to work as an agent for King Foo Entertainment – the last 9,5 years. My roster has 10 quite big Finnish metal bands and I also represent 10 international artists exclusively in Finland. Depends on the day, those can be also much more.

We do sell several artists to festivals and make tours for them – also by request of local promoters or requests by agencies on an international level. Also a lot of things we need to turn down because there are only a couple of guys working in the office only.

My company also does the management for a few Finnish artists like Amorphis, Lost Society, The Local Band etc. And of top of that: I work as a promoter of Tuska-Festival – the 19th year now.

I’ve been playing in bands when I was younger. I was working in the studio and as a roadie/technician. I have done a lot and lot of things in the music business and learnt a lot of things by mistakes. I am not really schooled for this, except for the working.

I used to work as a booker for the venue Lepakko, legendary Elmu Ry venue. Then we moved to Nosturi where I have worked something like 4 years. All together something like 9 years. After that in King Foo and now Greybeard Concerts & Management.

We cover mostly metal, also some Japanese concerts, also some Korean stuff. But focusing on metal mainly because this comes from the heart. This has been a hobby since I have been 14 years old: Judas Priest, Iron Maiden. I’ve been very lucky to work with those acts I have been fan of when I was a kid. And promoting concerts from small clubs to arena level. That’s basically what we do!

When and why did you decide to become a booking agent?

I didn’t decide. It starts when you play in your own band and you figure out nobody can take care better of it than yourself. Then it is also like when you get kicks out of getting things done and selling things to someone. It sounds weird, but it is also a bit pervert situation that you are selling art and you get money out of it and then you get kicks out of it. But that’s what you need to be a good agent.
You are working in the Finnish Music Business: How did the Finnish Music Business change in the past 5 years? How has it been back then and how is it now?

5 years is a quite short term, I think. Last 10 years: it has become more to an international level (working agencies a lot). The competition is harder but it is also overheated, I would say. There are so many concerts nowadays. Not all of them can collect enough audience. And this is kind of problematic a bit.

So, if we say 15 or 10 years back, it was more like: there was just a few major agencies delivering international acts to the Finnish scene. And also the Finnish club scene hasn’t really chanced that much last the 5 years. It is quite stable.

But yeah, the economic situation the last 1.5 years is a bit different but that is a different story.

How did these changes influence the Live Music Business and the work of a booking agent?

I don’t see there like real changes. You need to be yourself and believe in your artists. I have actually been really lucky with my roster. It’s wrong way to say it is easy to work with but it is a hard work. I don’t necessarily know how to answer your question, but this is what I do.

Where do you see the position of an agent in nowadays music industry?

Booking agents are kind of key-players. As an artist you need a reliable, good booking agent. The variation is so wide. You have so many different levels of agents and so you have very different levels of artists.

Of course as an artist you need to have a good agent, a good management and you need to have a working relationship with your label – rather it is digital distribution or still physical.

The agent is the one who delivers your yearly income with your own talent. So, I would say it is crucial part.
Booking agencies in Finland: on one hand major agencies, on the other independent agencies. You are working in an independent agency. What differs your agency from a major agency?

We are quicker in our moves, I think. We are not connected to any ticket sales companies with any handcuffs. But we play with the same rules. We go to the same territories; we go to the same market. Yeah, it is a competition. Sometimes they are stronger; sometimes we are quicker. But my company works with all of them. That’s also because we have the Tuska festival and I have been working with the Finnish festivals since. Sometimes – especially the international bands – hop from agency to agency. There is also sometimes a swap between smaller agencies. Some bands I used to represent are now with some Tampere based agency.

What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

That’s something you should ask from the artist. But I think: strength is 100% guarantee delivery - usually. It is very rare that the shows I have been booked got cancelled. And, I usually work with the guarantee that the artist also delivers. This is very important when I pick a band. Sometimes they also pick me. If I don’t know how to deal with the artist, I don’t touch it. Sometimes we make mistakes also. But this is a general rule. If I don’t have a clue what it is all about, it doesn’t make a sense to touch it at all. Or I don’t know the artist at all as a person. It is also difficult to work with.

What do you offer the artist what another agency cannot offer?

I don’t know. Very bad joke! Anyway, my segment is not that wide. We mostly represent metal acts and the roster is quite strong. I admit sometimes that it is a strength that you get the same kind of artists and the same kind of things. You can package things easier.

Is their any competition between the agencies in the Finnish Music Business? How did the competition change in the past 5 years?

Sure! A lot. All the time. The whole business is competition! It’s competition of ticket
sales. It is competition of available venues. You just need to be a few steps ahead of everybody else and that’s the deal. And it is getting ruder and ruder – of course. More and more coming. And I don’t see it going easier in the future. But of course with a lot of agencies we work together. But it is nothing personal ever, it is more or less just business.

Your work as an agent: What is a good booking agent? Name some criteria!

Reliable and reliable! You deliver what you promised to deliver. You don’t promise too much. Make the deals that you can also deliver from client to client, I mean from the promoter to the artist. And sometimes it is also better if your company doesn’t do any production things. You just do the bookings and that’s it. But we also serve from the production side and control those things. But yeah, you should know your clients both sides. That’s the key thing. You are reachable but not 24/7. You are not their mommy or their daddy. You don’t have to answer for a missing beer crate. If you answer as an agent in the night for these kind of questions, you have made something wrong in your business plan. Agent is agent. And agent is not the nanny.

How important is experience for being a good agent? How did experiences develop yourself in the past?

It is of course mandatory to have some experience but you can always start. The most important thing is that you learn from your mistakes and you listen to your clients and partners. You can create very easily a reputation for yourself that people don’t answer. It also means, not pushing too much and listening to people what they want. And if they say “No”; the first “no” does not necessarily mean “no”. When you know your clients and promoters and then some of them say “no”, then it means immediately “no”. Also depends on cultural things. Lets say it like this way: if you call to Japan, it is a bit different than talking to Germans. And it is also the same in Finland. If you talk to Pohjamaa, it is not the same as you talk to Joensuu! Different ways and different levels. This is also all about the experience. You know how things go and you know your busi
ness. Sometimes it is a trap when people say: “Why don’t we do the same deal like last time?” Don’t you want to create the business on the other side as well – and the artist? I basically hate that when somebody asks if we can do the same deal as last time. It means our business is stuck, it is not moving.

**Mostly the artist has a team of experts around him/her: Do you think the booking agent can be the one who helps to develop an artist the most?**

Not necessarily. I think it is the artist, the management and record labels. But yeah, you can also push your artist to the next level as an agent. Trying to figure out and putting them to support slots. There are so many levels of artist development. There is no 2-min answer for that one.

**How influential are booking agents for the career of an artist?**

That’s also a half an hour answer. It depends on the artist. Some artists realize - when they change the agent - that now something happens, now it is a totally different style and promoters. It can be very effective but also like working a long time with the same agent, you can see the long-term progress. And also ups and downs. On the downside as an agent: when an artist is going down, you have to remember the good days that they delivered you e.g. a lot of money. When there is a blue moment, I don’t want ever think first - when these down hills come - “Okay, forget it. Let’s do something else.”

Of course it is also when you run a company. You need to think what you do first. Those things bring the income and those things, which you just love. This is balancing things. And you need to ask yourself. And I have to quite often ask myself why I do this thing and then realized I spent half of a day doing something that might bring in the money or that might bring the artist career up in 5 years. Or something what just feels so good that you need to do it. Or trying hard.

But in some point you also have to say “Okay, that’s it! I did my best, I don’t know how to do this anymore. Then just admit that this is not good for you and not good for me anymore.”
What are requirements for you to book a new artist?

I need to see something in them. I really need to believe in them or someone tells that this band is going to be something in the future and I have to believe that by myself as well. And nowadays also, the roster is quite wide and I need to be really careful. I am not really looking for any new tasks. With international bands I work as much there is time for it. But also overfeeding the market with the same style artist: next autumn is a very good example that there is super overheated October coming. So, I am really not looking for any new acts to get booked.

What are the reasons for you to cut off bands from your roster?

Basically I answered that question earlier.

Do you have a role model in the music business for your work?

Not really. There are rather role models that I don’t want to follow. A lot of those; I read a book about the Led Zeppelin manager - very entertaining book - and that guy was not very nice. I don’t really hang out in those music fair-trade events. There are a lot of people I do respect but not really follow. Day by day trying to keep my own clients happy. And make them feel like home.

How do you see the role of booking agents in the Finnish Music Business in the next 5 years? Which of your activities will be changing?

It might be that I might be focus on less – hopefully. And all agents always think that it would be nice not to have a mega-wide roster. And I hope I will have more people working on this company and taking care about a lot of things I am taking care at the moment.

I really get kicks about booking and selling and also creating the festival side. Grey-beard: I hope we are focusing on managing a couple bands. We are not only selling our artists to the Finnish market. We also book some acts to Russia, Japan, South America by ourselves. We work with promoters from there because of course we don’t book directly to the clubs there. When festivals contact us from Europe - like with Lost Society
– we do it by ourselves. There is no agency set outside of Finland at the moment with them. So, we are waiting for the right moment with them. I got a quite nice network with festival promoters. So that part, I am take care about myself at the moment.