

Broke My *Heart*

A candid reflection on the emotional realities of working in music — when talent, hard work, and genuine connection aren't always enough.

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SUBJECT · **CAREER · REJECTION**

It happens to all of us I guess.

I won't name the project to protect the innocent. Actually everyone here is innocent, each person is doing what they think is best for their music and art.

I was really excited to mix this artist; sure it was a tiny budget, but I thought the songwriting was incredible, the musicianship was great, and the singer floored me. The producer was well known in his field, and here I had a chance to mix the album!

If I pulled this off, I really thought it would be a jewel in my crown.

I was given one song to do a test mix for. I worked really hard on it and nervously sent it back.

They loved it! What! Wow. I did a couple of revisions and it was done.

The word that I got was that they weren't quite so enthusiastic about the mixes that they were getting from the engineer that recorded the project, so they wanted to give me a try.

They were sending me the rest of the 11 song album and as I listened to each one I fell more and more in love with this project.

I started working on several of the songs. These had a bit of a different vibe than the first mix, but were really lovely.

I got them sounding really nice; definitely improving on their rough mixes that I had and so I sent off another four songs; back to the artist and producer for comments.

Then I was getting no feedback. I kept working on the remaining songs and waited to hear what they thought of what I was doing.

Nothing.

Then my manager and I start hearing that the band was really close to the engineer who did the recordings.

They said my mixes were really good, they loved them. I'd nailed it. But they were sitting with the recording engineer; actually I think they said that the artist and producer "sat on" the engineer and forced him to make his mixes better.

They had my mixes to work from as a target.

Eventually they said that they were really sorry but were going to go back with their guy. They said they would be using my mix of the first song as the single, and they would be willing to pay a kill-fee for the work I'd sent them already on the other songs.

I was devastated. I didn't even care about the money; but I did need to get something to compensate my manager and my lawyer for their time and effort. Turns out my mix fee for one song and the kill fees for the four submitted songs ate up much of their original mixing budget. I'd have done it all for free at this point, I really liked the project and I'd done most of the work already. I kind of felt bad to take their money! Ugh.

Turns out they didn't even use my mix for the single after all; at least they didn't credit me for it.

I can't bear to listen to the mixes that they released; I don't know if they are good or bad, I have not heard what they did. I have not heard if they hewed closely to the bar that I had set for them. I have not heard if they used my mix for the single.

"Don't make enemies."

RULE NUMBER ONE

As I write this, I struggle to find a lesson or a reason to share it with you.

The music business is far from a straightforward or clear path. There are a lot of emotions, friendships, loyalties, and relationships involved. These can interfere with business decisions, with artistic decisions, and with financial decisions at any point in the process.

At every level of the business this is likely happening. So I will, and I urge you to take

heart, believe in yourself even in the face of rejection, and know that it isn't going to be fair, straightforward, or easy at any or every point in your career.

My number one rule in pursuing a career in music has always been 'don't make enemies'. My number two rule has always been 'take every opportunity that presents itself.'

"Take every opportunity that presents itself."

RULE NUMBER TWO

Maybe, one day, I'll even hear those songs again and be able to enjoy them as I once did and as I hope that this artist's fans do.

So while I do have bitterness towards this particular project, it is not towards the people involved, and I do not regret taking that opportunity and showing what I can do.