

A Case Study in Music Marketing: The Aury Moore Band

by Solveig Whittle

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Part I A few weeks ago I attended an inspiring CD release party for the Aury Moore Band's new CD, Here I Am. The AMB is a female-fronted indie Seattle rock band whose latest CD was produced by Stevie (full disclosure). I've been fortunate to be a part of Aury's inner circle, and even to feed her a few music marketing tips. She's an experienced and accomplished musician and marketer herself, and I wanted to share the story of this 12-song CD.



This article is the first of a two-part series. In the first post, I describe how Aury used Kickstarter to successfully crowdfund over \$20,000 to record, promote and pre-sell her CD. In Part II, I outline how Aury followed up with a highly successful CD release party and what might lie in store as she continues the process of marketing her newest release.



The promotion of this CD began even before it was produced. A well-executed CD release, launch and promotion process is ideally 12-14 months, and a crowd funding campaign with Kickstarter (or via another crowd funding platform such as PledgeMusic, IndieGoGo or RocketHub) is an important and powerful marketing and pre-sales technique.

The Timeline

Spring 2012: Aury and her band came to Stevie, wanting to record a new CD. Aury had recorded in the past, and had actually begun the process with another producer, but he was tragically killed. She didn't have funds to continue making the CD at the time, and was talking to a few individual fans about the possibility of them funding it. Aury and I talked about the idea of doing a Kickstarter campaign to raise money instead of relying on one or two individuals. I invited Seattle singer-songwriter Jean Mann over to my house to participate in a group discussion on music marketing for several of Stevie's clients. Jean graciously detailed to the group how she had used Kickstarter to raise money for her CD. It was something Aury and her band had never done before, but Aury recognized the potential right away and started planning.

Summer 2012: Aury researched Kickstarter, and then began work on the video and premiums for her campaign.

August – October 2012: The AMB Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign ran for 60 days, ultimately raising \$2000 above the original goal.

October 2012 – May 2013: Stevie, Aury and the band recorded and mixed the CD.

June 2013: Aury Moore Band CD release party happens with over 400 people attending.

July 2013: As of this writing, the new CD is available on CD Baby, iTunes, Amazon, etc. and they have sold about 600 physical CDs.

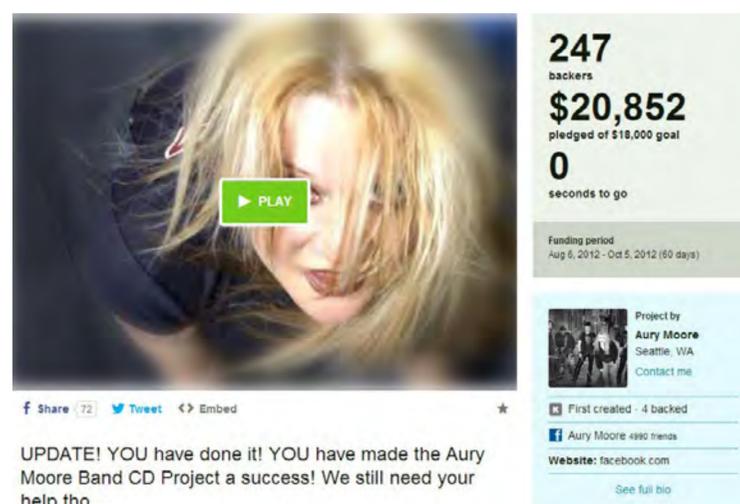
A Creative and Lively Kickstarter Crowdfunding Campaign

The AMB Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign ran August 6 through October 5, 2012. Of course, it raised funds to enable the recording and marketing of the CD, but it also generated a lot of excitement and momentum for the band. Remarkably, Aury did not have a website or mailing list during this time, nor was the band very active on Twitter. Aury has a very active FaceBook page, though, as well as more than 10,000 fans on ReverbNation. And she worked them!

There are so many things Aury did right with her crowdfunding campaign. She raised \$20,852 with 247 backers. That's an average of \$84 per backer, almost \$15 more than the average Kickstarter pledge of \$70.

Some key elements of the crowdfunding campaign:

Creativity, transparency and humor. The entire crowdfunding campaign was a showcase for Aury's personality, which is humble, straightforward and honest, focused on her fans. Her communications mirrored her down-to-earth personality. The pitch video was a spoof of a commercial beer ad, but it also highlighted Aury's strengths as a performer with live footage of the band. It was well-edited and had great voice-over narration. It was re-done several times until Aury felt it was right. You can read more about the trials of Aury's Kickstarter video making process on Launch and Release. Here's what Aury had to say to me about the Kickstarter video:



247 backers
\$20,852 pledged of \$18,000 goal
0 seconds to go

Funding period
Aug 6, 2012 - Oct 5, 2012 (60 days)

Project by
Aury Moore
Seattle, WA
Contact me

First created - 4 backed

Aury Moore 490 friends
Website: facebook.com
See full bio

UPDATE! YOU have done it! YOU have made the Aury Moore Band CD Project a success! We still need your help tho...

I wish I could have figured out a way to get more people to WATCH the video. Of all the people who pledged only 41% watched the video. No actually it is pretty cool that 59% of the people pledged without watching the video but... I can't help but believe if more people would have watched the video, they would have likely shared it and I think we would have raised a lot more money. People who didn't even know us,

who watched the video pledged simply bcz they loved the video.

Constant communication, always with a clear Call To Action (CTA). Frequent and artful promotion was the focus of Aury's personal and band FaceBook pages during her campaign. She also made several follow-on videos during the campaign and published 24 lengthy and detailed text updates for her backers on Kickstarter to keep them engaged. Aury was relentless about politely reminding people of the campaign deadlines and using every technique to amplify her message by offering incentives for her backers to promote it to their networks as well. Every communication, every thank you, always included a link back to the campaign and a request to pledge. "Don't be afraid to ask" and "Then, make it super easy for people to give right then" we're critical techniques behind the success of Aury's campaign.

A wide range of premiums. Aury had 24 different premiums, from the standard \$25 digital download plus signed CD, to more creative and personal items that were limited in number, a testament to the marketing idea that emphasizing that something scarce will increase its value. Her premiums are a great example of the Whale/Minnow/Dolphin marketing segmented monetization technique, where offers are numerous and varied in price to draw in a wide range of contributors at all levels. Here's what Aury had to say on this:

The pledge items were fun! The ones that people loved the most were the really personal ones. We had a package for \$222 [Aury is obsessed with this number, for reasons too long to go into here]. For your pledge of \$222 you received a night of me cooking you dinner. We of course made a point to let you know that I can't cook... We had 13 people pledge for me to cook them dinner anyways! A few other cool items were Eddie's Hats. During our shows our drummer has this little shtick of him changing hats during the shows. The fans are constantly trying to catch him changing his hat... it is fun... well... Eddie gave away 12 of his hats. We also let someone shave his head and I gave away 2 hard board posters from my first CD release party. there were only a total of 3 made. 2 with autographs from all the people who played that show with me including Alan White of Yes and Michael Wilton of Queensryche. I have one of these for myself but I gave away the other 2 in my Kickstarter campaign. One with autographs and one without. People liked the one of a kind items. I also added more pledge packages by request from people who wanted to pledge. People asked me to add shot glasses and tshirts that would be autographed that were not the ones made for the campaign. I also had people negotiate with me... they offered to pledge if I would come out and perform a song with their band. I did this on two occasions.

Personally and creatively thanking every backer. Again, here is Aury herself on how she did this:

Every time someone pledged I personally thanked them for their pledge. I made some silly pictures that had the Kickstarter information on it as well as our slogan "You Pledge... We give you cool stuff!" and our other slogan, "Be a part of the AMB!!" If you were a FaceBook friend I would make my thank you public by posting this silly picture on your FaceBook page for all the world to see. This also helped us with pledges. We attached the link to these pictures so people could check it out.

Knowing how to look good in front of a camera. This is something that isn't talked about enough in discussions of band marketing. Aury posts many flattering photos of herself and the band on her FaceBook page. It's an important part of her fan engagement strategy. She knows how to work a camera, photo or video, for maximum effect. Having a wide range of great band photos is important for creating great marketing materials, too. As a former professional wedding photographer, Aury personally has a high bar for photos and videos, and she had a team of professionals (friends and family) who helped her get the video she wanted. Whether we like to admit it or not, it's important to look professional. People want to give money to a band that looks like they care enough to make themselves look good in both pictures and video. There have been many articles written about making a good Kickstarter video, but I think one thing that gets confused is the idea of being genuine while still having high production value. The video should look fun and casual, but be well-produced. Aury's video accomplishes that effectively.

Adding new premiums and a stretch goal during the crowdfunding campaign. When Aury reached her initial fundraising goal of \$18,000, she had a stretch goal already in mind of an additional \$2K to create an add-on CD of jazz and standards. She also polled her backers and asked what kinds of premiums they wanted, or wanted more of. She added new premiums part way through the campaign based on that feedback.

Cause marketing. Aury has been passionate about raising money for charitable causes for a long time, and she worked this in to her Kickstarter campaign as well. From the AMB Kickstarter update #15:

Also, something I am very excited about is that the AMB WILL be spending a day in Seattle, passing out pizza to the homeless! We had a pledger from Florida make a deal with me... on the stipulation that the band would take a day and give out pizza to the homeless. In addition to his pledge he will also be supplying the pizza. Once we hit the goal I decided to pitch in and buy some pizza as well. Now many of my friends want to be a part and this day. It is looking to become a great event. We are even toying with the idea, if people want to join us, cool, and we encourage them to help by maybe bringing other items these people may need. Blankets, Coats, Socks etc. We all have items we no longer use... I am excited about the possibilities. I actually spoke with a friend of mine who is homeless. He gave me advice as to what to do to make sure when we do this, people in need will be aware! I am especially excited about what that day is going to bring. It has been a good motivator for me. I am thrilled knowing this is actually going to happen!

What she would do differently. Here are Aury's own words about that:

What did I do wrong? For some reason I struggled getting all the band members to buy in to what I was doing. I don't know if they really got all that I was doing in order for us to be able to complete this CD. If I could do it all over again I would try to figure out a way to get the entire band to buy in to the campaign we were doing. I think if they felt like they had more ownership in what we were doing we may have raised more money.

There's a lot to be learned by studying other bands' Kickstarter campaigns. It's important to note, though, that Aury's campaign was successful because she was just being herself – an honest, straightforward and generous person. She didn't do it all herself – she has a group of people, her superfans, her informal “street team,” who have helped her. However, like any successful entrepreneur, Aury did her research, she planned in advance, came up with some very creative ideas, worked extremely hard, executed well, and inspired her team to work hard for her. The success of her Kickstarter campaign shows the fruits of that work.



Part II In Part I of this series, I focused on the successful Kickstarter (\$20K+) crowdfunding campaign held last fall by the female-fronted indie Seattle band, the Aury Moore Band. Their recently released CD, Here I Am was produced this spring by Stevie (full disclosure). I'm not affiliated myself in any way with band, although I've shared some marketing tips with her over the years, and I appreciate what Aury has done to market her CD. In this post, I will detail Aury's June 2013 CD release party for Here I Am, including the budget and key promotional elements.

Budget

I received several requests for more detailed cost information after writing a blog post about my own (much smaller) CD release party in April. I think Aury's party is a better lesson on how to make money on a CD release party, so I asked her if she would be willing to share her numbers. She was most gracious, so here they are:

Costs: Approximately \$1300

Venue: \$0

Merchandise: \$200 (most was left over from the Kickstarter campaign)

Raffle Items: \$100

Posters, Flyers and VIP Passes:\$260

Pre-printed Tickets: \$40

1000 CDs (jewel case, 4-page color folder/traycard): \$1500 (roughly 400 were given out the night of the party, and an additional 200 mailed out to Kickstarter backers)

Revenue: Approximately \$10,000

Pre-sold Tickets: \$4000 (online ticket fees were paid by purchasers)

Tickets Sold At Door: \$4000 (some attendees were "comped")

Extra Raffle Tickets: \$200 (went to charity)

Merchandise: \$700

(I assume Aury has some kind of revenue-sharing deal with her bandmates, but I didn't ask about that.) So how did Aury end up netting around \$8K at her CD release party?

Pre-Sell Tickets Online And In Person

Aury has plenty of experience pre-selling and promoting her own shows, as she has been performing around the Pacific Northwest for years:

We had a roughly 400 people come to the show. We presold 200 tickets at \$20, and charged \$25 at the door. Each ticket came with a complimentary CD and a raffle ticket. 62 were sold thru Brown Paper Tickets and 138 were sold personally by band members. With Brown Paper Tickets you can order printed tickets for 10 cents each. We bought 400 total in the hopes that we would be able to sell them. Unfortunately we presold less tickets than what I had expected. In the past, our presells have been much higher... but the economy has been a factor.

I have been working with Brown Paper Tickets now for about 5 years. I am a big fan. Their service fees [\$.99 plus 3.5%] are very low compared to other ticketing outlets. They are local but service all over the world. They have a location in Fremont [Seattle] and a location in Edinburgh [Scotland]. They are open 24/7 and they are very helpful. They mail you a check for your tickets sold within 3 to 5 days or if you are local you can pick it up yourself and they make it very easy for someone to buy thru them. I recommend them to everyone.

Aury makes an important point about pre-sales: many pre-sold ticket-holders will not attend. While you might look at pre-sold ticket with a no-show as a revenue bonus, it's also important to consider that you want a packed house:

Of the presold tickets, about 160 of them attended. I have found that if I presell tickets 2 things happen... there is a 70% likelihood that if they pay for the ticket in advance they are much more likely to come. When I trust people to come to the door there is often a lower percentage who say they will be there that actually come! You want to get them to buy tickets in advance in order to ensure a full room.

Promotion

A successful party requires a lot of promotion in advance:

We promoted the show in much the same way as we did the crowdfunding campaign... We screamed it from the mountain tops! I start promoting a show 6 to 8 weeks in advance. We pushed it every day on our [FaceBook] pages... I also used my email list and had friends share with their friends... we had so many people talking about it that a buzz was created. I use FaceBook, reverbnation, my website, email, posters, flyers and word of mouth... Everyone of my players are out and about playing at jam sessions or doing shows of their own... they are already in front of music supporters so I encourage them to promote the show with the people that come and support them at their gigs.

When someone bought tickets online I publicly thanked them on their pages. We promoted the special guests [see more on that below] we had perform with us... I had my friends promote the show and I also gave them some tickets to sell as well. I did 3 internet radio interviews and 1 radio interview to help promote the show. We put together an event page and made our most helpful fans admins on that page... we posted silly pictures... we talked about what a great venue Louie G's is and the fact that people could bring their kids bcz it is an all ages venue. We made a video on YouTube and pushed that.... and we gave people teasers of the songs that we would be performing.

I [also] made posters and flyers and gave them to my band members along with tickets. I am of the belief that flyers do not sell tickets... if you give someone a flyer it gives that person an excuse not to buy a ticket right there and then... they hold off and often do not buy a ticket. If you have tickets in hand and tell people they can buy now... you are more likely to get more people to buy...

Aury also recommends using Reverbnation to promote shows:

I did use Reverbnation for promoting both Kickstarter and our CD release. Another nice thing about Reverbnation. If you post a show on their site, they feed that information to other media sites like The Seattle Weekly and Tacoma Weekly, The Tribune... etc.

Inviting A Famous Artist To Sit In

AuryNRogerAury invited Roger Fisher, a long-time friend of hers and the original lead guitarist for the iconic Seattle pop band, Heart, to play with her on a few numbers. Recently inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Heart have experienced a renaissance of sorts and a higher profile lately, especially in Seattle. Roger is great guitarist and performer, and he played an amazing solo on Dear Prudence, one of the cover songs on Aury's CD.

I have seen many other Seattle bands invite fellow musicians to open for them at their CD release parties, as this is a great way to pull in additional attendance. By inviting just one person from Heart, Aury artfully ensured that her band would not be overshadowed, while still taking advantage of the current nostalgia and buzz around Roger and Heart. Their fan demographics are very similar, so this was a win-win for both Aury and her band and some nice visibility for Roger, who has just released his own solo CD.

Smart Choice of Venue

Louie G's Pizza, where Aury held her release party, has had a long and positive relationship with the band. They did not charge Aury for the venue, and they also did not take a cut of the door. Instead, Louis G's made their money from a packed house who purchased food (pizza buffet) and drinks. Despite their name,

this is not your average pizza place. It's a great venue to play, with a stage, full lights, and a sound engineer at the board. Aury worked hard to fill the house that night, and it was standing room only in the stage area. Aury has a dynamic stage show, complete with a fog machine. For Aury, this venue was comfortable and familiar, and many of her fans have heard her there before, so they knew what to expect.

One reason why I like Louie G's is because they give the entire door to the artist. Artists should take the time to find out what venues do this... I have played some very established rooms who take a large percentage of the door... If an artist is willing to do the work to fill a room I think the venue should enjoy the rewards of sales and let the artist have the door. Unfortunately some artists don't get the importance of filling a room and some venues do not get how much work an artist puts in to help the venue have a successful night of sales. I tend to look for rooms that support the artist and let them keep the door but I also do my part to ensure that they will want me back. Louie G's is a venue that is happy to have the Aury Moore Band play their room.

Merchandise

2013-06-22 19.27.46Aury sold \$700 worth of band merchandise during the show. She had a table set up, fully staffed with several people. She also had the Northwest Harvest donation boxes situated right next to the merchandise table (smart!), and the raffle items were right there on displayed on or next to the merch table. Read through to get Aury's valuable feedback on what types of merchandise (even the colors!) sold the best:

Most of our merchandise we already had with the exception of the shot glasses and the posters. I had to buy those anyway for the crowdfunding campaign so when it comes to new merchandise I paid no more than a couple hundred... I also presold some items at the CD Release party... some items are tough to have the right sizes in stock so for the Hoodies we let people order theirs at the show and ordered them after the show, mailing them out to these fans. No cost on the table and the people we had working it were family so they worked it for free... we did throw them a tip tho (We, as a band are also in the habit of tipping out our soundman... it is a good habit to get into....) So... really when it comes to costs incurred on merchandise, we bought items we had to buy anyway. So... the cost was not really a factor...

Types of merchandise sold at the table: Both of my CDs, mens shirts, women's shirts, juniors shirts, hoodies, baseball caps, slouch caps, skull/knit/beanie caps, shot glasses, 3 different posters of the band, 2 different posters of me alone.

The slouch caps were the biggest hit! ... my supplier suggested I try them.... so we ordered 12 – after the party I only had 3 left. They out-sold the baseball caps and skull caps. Crazy huh?

We have the shirts in multiple color choices that complement our logo. I actually surveyed my men friends and asked them what color shirts they would like... I was surprised that men like options.. I typically would choose black but the men wanted lighter colors like steel blue, olive, charcoal and sand... The ladies prefer either black, charcoal, navy blue or dark chocolate brown so.. we found a supplier who will let me order many different colors for the same price! Score! I know that is off topic but it is good to know...

Important Note: Make sure to set up and test a credit card reader like Square or PayPal (now available for free online from PayPal or at office supply stores for \$15) with your iPhone or iPad in advance. The Square and PayPal apps themselves are free to download. It's best to have WiFi at the event to make this happen, but a cell signal is sufficient if using an iPhone. It's well worth being able to take credit card payments for merchandise, and the fees are low. Aury could not get her Square to work at the event, but felt she could have sold \$300 more of merchandise if she had.

Friend and Family Staffing

One of the nice things about Aury's party was that she recruited friends and family to work the party for free, staffing her merchandise table, taking tickets at the door, selling raffle tickets, and shooting pictures. I worked the door for her, selling extra raffle tickets, answering general questions and orienting people, and directing them to the food bins and merchandise table.

Aury thoughtfully made up plastic laminated VIP passes in advance for staff (I admit I love these things, and she may have gotten the idea from my CD release party). It's a nice way to make your volunteers feel special during the show, and it's a great piece of memorabilia.

Raffle

Aury held a very successful raffle during the show, in which she raffled a (real, working) guitar signed by the band, a cymbal from Eddie the drummer, a hard board poster from a prior CD release party, and some signed posters. Thanks to a generous fan who donated a Kickstarter premium item back to her, she made extra money from one of the raffled items:

There are only 3 of these [hard board posters] total. The gentleman who pledged [on Kickstarter] for this item (it was the poster with no signatures on it) bumped his pledge up from \$300 to \$500 and then he gave it back to me to have for a raffle item at this show! Yay!

Note: Memorabilia are important to fans – so bands that save things for future events will reap the rewards later. Super-fans can also be very generous, and just a few of them can make a huge difference, if you make opportunities for them to do so.

Aury gave items away throughout the party, and this inspired a few more people to buy raffle tickets at the break.

All the funds raised via the raffle were donated to a charitable cause...

Collecting For A Charitable Cause At the Show

One of the really nice things Aury promoted in advance was that she was collecting food for a well-known and respected local food bank, Northwest Harvest, at the show. Always the smart marketer, Aury has been doing cause marketing for several years under the moniker Starving Artists for Northwest Harvest, so her fans are well aware of this. Attendees who brought non-perishable food items for donation received \$5 off her merchandise. She ended up with 5 full boxes of food to give to Northwest Harvest, who supplied the large printed donation boxes in advance.

A Great Stage Show

Last but not least by any means, Aury put on a fantastic show that night. She is a great stage performer, really high energy, sexy, and charismatic. The fans ate it up! She played the entire album from top to bottom in two sets, and the audience was rapt. Many of the attendees have seen Aury perform already, and they knew they would get their money's worth. She gave them multiple reasons to show up: to watch and listen to a great stage show in an excellent performance space, to celebrate with her, to get a physical copy of the CD they couldn't get yet anywhere else, to win raffle items, to contribute to a charitable cause, to see a famous guitar player, and to eat good pizza. Who wouldn't want to be there?

Ongoing Promotion

Aury continues to promote the CD and plan for the future of the band.

I have and will continue to do radio interviews. I just did 2 interviews on Talk in the Shadows radio and will be doing another with NWCZ on Tuesday for The Aquarium Show. I also am building a relationship with a Kim Justice of Brain Injury Radio.

We are currently starting to book shows for the band but the real goal is to be able to tour. I want to start the tour in Europe. It is a good market for independent musicians. The radio stations are very open to playing independent artists. I am currently in the market for a financial backer to help get the seed money needed to have a successful tour. I am not afraid of hard work and I am very serious about promoting and filling rooms when my band performs. Pray we can find a backer that will work with us! In the meantime I am going to book shows for the band and probably some acoustic shows as well. We also are looking into getting our music in soundtracks and on TV shows. But really, the thing we want to do is share our music with Live shows. We want to meet the people who have supported us in person and we want to continue to write and record good music!

