



WHY ARTISTS BURNOUT.

Exploring the Complexities Behind Creative Burnout.

In the dynamic world of artistic expression, where passion meets profession, burnout has become an all too familiar adversary for many creators. The World Health Organization characterises burnout by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's creative endeavour, and reduced efficacy. These dimensions encapsulate the multifaceted nature of burnout experienced by artists across various disciplines.

*Please Note: *As always we understand that every creative project and individual is different. This article is intended for creatives that plan to create a career out of their artistic endeavour. In addition, it would be remiss of us not to continue without addressing the fact that as creative business owners ourselves, we have experienced burnout multiple times and continue to face challenges with striking a balance between every priority we have.*

A recent survey conducted by Pirate.com stated among 1,500 DJs and musicians revealed alarming statistics, with 66% of respondents admitting to experiencing burnout at least once. Furthermore, a staggering 72% described investing more money into their craft than they actually earn—a testament to the financial strain many artists face. This trend underscores the harsh reality that pursuing a creative career often demands more than it gives back. For independent artists, juggling their creative pursuits alongside other responsibilities—such as work, education, family, and personal well-being—adds another layer of complexity to the equation. In an era where music consumption is at its peak and resources for artistic development are readily available, the pressure to sustain oneself within the industry has intensified. This relentless pursuit of sustainability can lead to chronic stress and, ultimately, burnout.

Working in the creative realm presents its unique set of challenges. Initially, embarking on a creative endeavour is fueled by passion and ambition, but over time, it can morph into a source of anxiety and frustration. Factors such as resource scarcity, time management issues, comparisons to peers, and uncertainty about industry norms contribute to the emotional rollercoaster experienced by artists. It's crucial for creatives to acknowledge these feelings and understand that experiencing them is a natural part of the journey. However, allowing these emotions to dictate one's actions can be detrimental to the artistic process.

Several symptoms often precede burnout among artists, for the purposes of this article we wish to highlight some behaviours and factors we have observed and felt.

- Poor Time Management.

While this will always differ between creatives, poor time management can quite often be a major factor in maximising the feeling of burn out. Balancing priorities is always a struggle when developing and sustaining an artist project and we often encourage artists to stick to some form of regularity / routine throughout the week. Being accountable to a routine helps to minimise internal body shock, sets clear boundaries for when you are or are not focused on the project, and will actually assist you in planning ahead.

For more information on time management + tips on how to maximise your time creatively, please see our article [here](#).

- Poor financial management.

Let's start by addressing the elephant in the room that every independent artist will address at some point in their career, loss. Most, if not all independent artists at some point have made a decision that will leave them out of pocket. This happens for a number of reasons, whether it be to grow an audience, a fantastic opportunity, or even a service that didn't quite work. It is incredibly difficult to make profit in any creative endeavour let alone create sustainability, so

for the majority of independent artists, who pour thousands of their personal money into their artist project, loss is just a part of the game. The trick as projects grow is to minimise loss by budgeting / understanding your expenses, and learning new skills that allow you to cut back (i.e not outsourcing mixing and learning to complete that task yourself).

For more information on understanding finances please see our article [here](#).

- Unrealistic expectations.

Most, if not all independent artists have had the following experience. They finish a song, they really love what they have created, and their expectation after release is to immediately receive hundreds of millions of streams, tour the world and make millions of dollars - just because the music is 'good'. What actually happens when the song is released is very different. Generally, it will receive a fraction of the amount of support artists expect. The release may achieve some good development in terms of awareness and repeat listenership in certain areas but will not reach the expectations set initially by the artist. A common artist response when this occurs, is to view the release as a failure.

In our experience, prior to, and after starting Cartel Australia, we have seen multiple artists continue the above cycle, over and over until unfortunately, they fall out of love with their own creative process due to continuous burn out. We are by no means saying that artists should not hold themselves in high regard or saying that it is impossible for music to be organically accepted, BUT the consistent 'perceived failure' is due to lack of execution on process and having too much value placed on the merit of any one song. This ultimately can (and does) result in artists stopping their projects and leaving music for good.

It is easy for artists to get caught up in the hype of something they are really proud of creating. What's important to remember is that there will always be another song, another EP, another album, another project to communicate their art. remain accountable and focus on the controllables rather than a subjective view of the art.

-Chasing vanity metrics.

In our daily conversations with artists, when asked about their goals for the project will state the following;

"I'd love to get added to X radio station and get editorial placements on X digital streaming platforms".

"My aim is to get 100,000 monthly listeners & a million streams"

For 98% of the artists the above and its variations will likely always result in burn out as the goals that they are looking to achieve are not directly measurable or in line with their control. Following that, for the small amount of artists who do hit their desired vanity metrics very quickly discover that the joy experienced hitting that goal is short lived, as those metrics often don't translate into meaningful growth for their creative endeavour.

In conclusion, burnout among artists is a pervasive issue rooted in the complexities of the creative process and the demands of the industry. By understanding the underlying causes and adopting proactive measures to mitigate them, artists can safeguard their well-being and preserve their passion for their craft. It's imperative for both individuals and the industry as a whole to prioritise mental health and create a supportive environment that nurtures creativity rather than stifling it. After all, the world is a richer place when artists are empowered to thrive.