The Biggest Issue We See With Local Artists

Style over substance is a massive issue in the local artist community.

Let's be direct. If you are an independent, grassroots artist trying to build a career in Australia right now, you are likely wasting your time, your money, and your energy on all the wrong things.

Before moving forward let's make a few things clear:
1. This article is not pointed at any artists in particular, more of a general view on the common trends we see in the artist community.

2. Social media content is a vital cog in the wheel of development BUT, it's not the only cog in that wheel. Content is important and aesthetic is important but only in the context of a wider brand.

We see it constantly. You spend weeks planning a photoshoot, hundreds of dollars on a videographer for a 15-second teaser, and hours colour-grading your feed so your Instagram profile looks like a boutique fashion magazine. But when someone hits play on the music, or looks for the story behind the project, there's nothing to hold onto.

> *"99% of the artists I work with in AD Sessions or speak with are almost always way too concerned about their aesthetic visually but not enough about developing actual real stance in their narrative... Style over substance is a massive issue for acts at a local level.*" — Anthony Agostino, Director, Cartel Australia PTY LTD

Having a heavily curated Instagram grid means nothing if no one is actually visiting your profile in the first place. You are decorating a room before inviting anyone into the house. Over-produced content is draining your bank account and killing your consistency. Independent artists routinely drop budgets they haven't earned on high-end promotional videos. Not only does this burn capital that should go into touring or production, but it also creates friction. High production values make you overthink. You end up posting once every three weeks because everything has to be "perfect," when real digital discovery comes off the back of repeat exposure, not one, or even ten, bits of glossed-over content. Furthermore, an over-reliance on content cannot mask subpar music or a limited catalogue. In the context of building long-term sustainability, obsessive content polishing feeds your ego more than it builds an actual audience.

Real reach does not come from you standing in front of a camera boasting about your aesthetic; it comes from User-Generated Content (UGC). It is exponentially more important for *other* creators to use your official sound across short-form platforms than it is for you to post polished clips with zero context.

The data confirms this shift in how music is discovered globally:

Metric / Focus Area	Impact & Data Point	Source / Context
Gen Z & Millennial Discovery	**82%** of Gen Z and **70%** of Millennials discover new music via short-form video & UGC platforms. Only **23%** rely primarily on DSP algorithmic recommendations.	Deloitte Digital Media Trends
Global Chart Entry	**84%** of songs entering the Billboard Global 200 first went viral via short-form UGC before charting anywhere else.	Global Music Industry Report
Primary Listening Time	Short-form video (8%) and social media video (5%) account for **13%** of total global primary music listening time.	Aggregate Streaming Data

The second half of the "style over substance" trap is an obsession with industry validation over listener connection.

Too many Australian acts place heavy emphasis on industry highlights and media support rather than building a real narrative. Here is the uncomfortable truth: a fanbase does not care about your industry clout.

- They don't care that you got accepted into BIGSOUND.
- They don't care that you scored a radio play on a late-night segment.
- They don't care that a blog gave your single a four-star review.

Industry benchmarks are vanity metrics for your peers; they are not connection points for fans. Audiences care about listening to music that makes them feel something. They care about connecting to an artist narrative that either genuinely interests them or mirrors their own lives. Stop dressing up empty releases with glossy visuals and press release headlines. Strip away the vanity, put your energy into writing undeniable songs, give people a reason to care about your story, and let real substance drive the project.