

SUPPORT SLOTS: Advice from local promoters

JOHN LEACH - JLP PRESENTS

How are international support slot decisions made?

Several ways:

- Vibe of the band and current sales
- Push from a local rep and management or record company
- Awareness by the promoter of the local band
- Ability for the support to add momentum and feel of the show
- Ability for the local band to help with ticket sales

What advice would you give to bands looking at approaching a promoter for a support slot?

- Push the suitability of their band to the promoter and the audience
- Advise how hot they are in the market and how it would add to sales or the show vibe.
- Make sure there is plenty of radio play in the market you are pitching for and even posters or advertising around when you are pitching.



MARIA ROBINSON - LIBERATION MUSIC

Who chooses international support slots?

The majority of all support acts for an international concert are actually chosen by the headlining band and their management. A lot of the time the promoter has absolutely no say in which support act will be chosen.

How do you choose support bands?

There is the odd occasion where we do get to choose or send through possible support band options for approval and in those instances we look for a support act that will appeal to the international acts audience, has a good live reputation, who is professional and who has some profile in the New Zealand market.

What advice would you give to bands looking at approaching a promoter for a support slot?

Don't send a million emails. An initial email to introduce your band is always a good idea. This should include a short history/overview (including any releases or gigs of note) and an mp3 or MySpace link to your band. If you don't hear anything back it's always good to follow up with a phone call. Sometimes the promoter may have honestly not got to your email or has seen it but hasn't had a chance to hear your music yet. Whatever you do, do not bombard them with emails and phone calls. Nobody likes to be hassled.



BENJI JACKSON - MUZAII RECORDS

What factors do you consider when choosing support bands for shows?

It's not just about who can pull a crowd, though admittedly it is an important aspect also. It's a variety of things on top of that - if the band's sound generally fits with the headline act, or if it would flow with the atmosphere of the night, if the bands in question get along with your headline act, if they've reasonable costs and/or expectation for the show. The crowd-pulling aspect is just part of those factors - you could have an incredible technical-metal band who have all their mates come along, but would they stick around for your dream-pop headline act? Chances are, probably not.

What advice would you give to bands looking at approaching a promoter for a support slot?

Be realistic; if you've played three shows to a small crowd, it doesn't matter that you're heavily influenced by the headline act; eight times out of ten they're going to go for someone who is a little more well known, has a little more widespread presence. Understand also that for the promoter, they've probably got scores of bands doing the same thing from big to small. A solid, informative pack with some achievements within the scene (local or national) and a best representation of your music is normally a strong case point for a promoter to check you out.

Then again, sometimes it's just pure luck - I recall Flipper coming over and a member of an Auckland based band being so brazen with the promoter that it worked. So I guess sometimes a bit of swagger goes a long way!



MYSTERY GIRL

BEN HOWE - MYSTERY GIRL

What factors do you consider when choosing support bands for shows?

Firstly they have to be musically appropriate for the international act, like the same style and genre. If they have an audience of their own that helps, though isn't entirely essential if I think they are a good band. Sometimes it can be nice to expose a good but unknown band to a whole lot of people who have never heard of them before.

It is fairly important that the band is easy to deal with and organised. Often international bands have a lot of backline and gear so the size (number of people) in the support band can also be a factor...bigger bands can be harder to squeeze on the stage.

Be aware of the fact that the promoter of the show has a lot on their plate with the main act and their touring party, so bands that are considerate to that are usually preferred.

How are international support slot decisions made?

Increasingly they are actually made by the international band/agent themselves. In some cases they are happy for me to choose the support slot and in other cases they want a list of 3 -4 bands to look at, so I send them links to the website/MySpace whatever...so it is good to keep those updated and looking/sounding good. I will usually only send them suggestions that I think will work.

What advice would you give to bands looking at approaching a promoter for a support slot?

Don't be afraid to ask, but don't be put off if you don't get it. Usually the best thing to do is play lots of shows, get out there and do stuff and you will come to the attention of people booking the shows.

GARETH CRAZE - RW ENTERTAINMENT

Who chooses International Support Slots?

It's not always up to the promoter to pick this band. Some international acts insist on screening and selecting support acts themselves, so if a promoter can't help you out, it could very well not be up to them!



How do you choose support bands?

I go for a combination of factors: Do the band in question stylistically suit as an opening act for the headliner - not mimic or sound exactly like them, but compliment them while fitting within the broader genre of the headliner. There's no point putting on a support act that isn't going to make it worth my while! If the band in question have a solid following, can be seen to market themselves and the show, and drag along a bunch of their mates (particularly if they're an out of town act who can drag along people who might not have otherwise gone) then that goes a LONG way to getting selected for a support slot. How much actual work does the band themselves do? I get support requests from bands that have never played a show or put out a demo! At the very least you should have something tangible for me to review - a demo or EP, at least semi-professionally recorded, is a good start. And playing shows, as many as you can, is equally if not more important. A band with little or no gigging or touring experience isn't going to go a long way towards being an appropriate act for an international headliner. I particularly take note of bands that have made an effort to play lots of shows outside their home region.

What advice would you give to bands looking at approaching a promoter for a support slot?

Don't act shitty if you get rejected. There's a tonne of bands in the same position as you and it's nothing personal. Don't waft on about how great you and your mates think you are. If you're any good, the merits of your band will speak for themselves - especially if you've got something half-decent recorded and have gigged/toured a bit. Don't try and get around the promoter. Many bands make the mistake of trying to go directly to the headliner act or their management. Big mistake. This will work against your band 99 times out of 100. The band and their management only field support requests from promoters directly. Any band approaching them will be quickly placed in the AVOID bin. Keep it simple. Make a short, two paragraph pitch about what you've recorded, where you've toured, any positive third party press - nothing generic like 'we're developing a real following down here in Raptorial' etc. Any promoter like me is going to, at best, skim over some three- page essay (particularly if it's full of spelling and grammatical errors - I even get some submissions in text speak!). Simple and self-explanatory is KEY.



MATTHEW CRAWLEY - STRANGE NEWS

What factors do you consider when choosing support bands for shows?

I really do try and create line-ups that work as a whole. It's fun choosing who to support, because it can really warm up a show well if done right. The wrong support can just make people impatient. Often there's a clear choice for who to support, but the one thing to avoid is getting bands who basically just copy their heroes. Explosions in the Sky once said they preferred to play with totally different bands to them, since promoters always pair them up with sound- alike. I like to help out bands that seem like they could use the break too, and really work well. I remember insisting that Seth & Merle (pre Seth-Frightening) support Beirut in Wellington, and it was so perfect! I kind of like going with a less obvious choice if I can. It can also be a factor thinking about the fan base of a group. If an act you're touring feels a bit risky, then a strong support can really make the show a bit more of a sure bet.

How are international support slot decisions made?

It really varies. Some bands want to make the final call based on a selection that they're sent from the promoter, others trust the decision made by the local promoter, or just plain don't care. The times when bands choose themselves, there's not a lot you can do about that. It's pretty great for a band when they do get handpicked though. When the promoter chooses, then ideally it's about who would be most suitable, and that's down to the show's promoter to decide more or less. Every promoter has usually got a ton of people in their ear offering opinions on this. I'm sure sometimes it's as simple as the band being mates with the promoter and it being about who you know, if I'm honest!

What advice would you give to bands looking at approaching a promoter for a support slot?

Send demos / emails / be audacious! I remember the Coolies getting the support slot for the Beastie Boys by walking up to them and telling them they were going to support them that night, no questions asked. That's the story I remember hearing anyway. It really can wind up being an inside job, so sometimes the best you can do is just play a lot, and build your local reputation up... sometimes bands get what they deserve in the end! It really does factor into my decision if a band flat out asks if they can do it, too. If they're asking - you know they'll be keen and help spread the word on the show too.