

ARTIST MANAGERS AND QUARTERBACKS

Running the Offense, Reading the Defense,
and Praying for Miracles

by Pam Browne

It's amazing, but artist managers and quarterbacks have a lot in common. As an artist manager, I often felt like a quarterback when I worked with artists in planning their careers. Unlike golf and tennis where the player controls his or her own fate, recording artists rely on the artist manager to assemble a team and map out strategies whereby the members contribute their expertise in executing a successful game plan.

One of the best quarterbacks in the NFL was Joe Montana. While he wasn't the most athletic player on the field and doesn't hold all the league records, Montana is still considered one of the NFL's premier quarterbacks because of his knowledge of the game, work ethic, and desire to win. These same qualities are exactly what an artist manager needs to be a successful player in the music industry.

A thorough knowledge of the music industry is imperative if an artist manager is to render the right advice and



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counsel to the recording artist. The great quarterbacks spend hours perusing the team's playbook and watching game film of opposing teams. To become successful, an artist manager should devote the same time to learning the music industry whether from reading trade magazines, analyzing industry trends, or perusing biographies of successful artist managers.

The desire to win is a key element of success. It's not enough for a football team to possess great talent ... the team also needs a quarterback to lead the team, motivate the players, and inspire excellence. There are many teams whose members aren't Pro Bowl candidates or MVP winners, but under the leadership of a great quarterback, the team can still reach heights to which other teams with "talent" may only dream.

How many times have you wondered why an "average" song soars up the charts or watched the meteoric rise of an artist and wondered

"why" or "how"? Most often the artist manager has played a significant part in the artist's success.

Just as the quarterback counts on the contributions of his team members to help win games, the artist manager assembles a team of professionals to give the artist the greatest chance for success. Team members may consist of a business manager, attorney, accountant, publicist, booking agent, or any other person deemed necessary to execute the career plan agreed upon by the artist and artist manager. The football team has an offensive squad whose mission is to put points on the board and a defensive squad poised to stop the opposing team from scoring.

The artist manager perceives team members in primarily two roles, creative or business. The creative team, including publicists, booking agents, and stylists, assists the artist manager in deciding on the artist's image, style, and target audience for performances. The business team, including the business manager, accountant, and attorney, assists the artist in developing





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a defensive posture to ensure that royalties and income are invested wisely, managed prudently, and correctly reported to the IRS.

The quarterback also plays an important role in the team's offensive and defensive strategies. Does the quarterback stay in the pocket, or is he more comfortable on the run? Artist managers have different styles of management and should be consistent with the artist's goals and aspirations.

Some artist managers prefer to hire outside team members on a fee basis. This allows the artist to contract with the team members for specified durations. Other artist managers want more control over team members and therefore hire specific in-house team members who possess the skills and expertise necessary to assist with the execution of the artist's career plan.

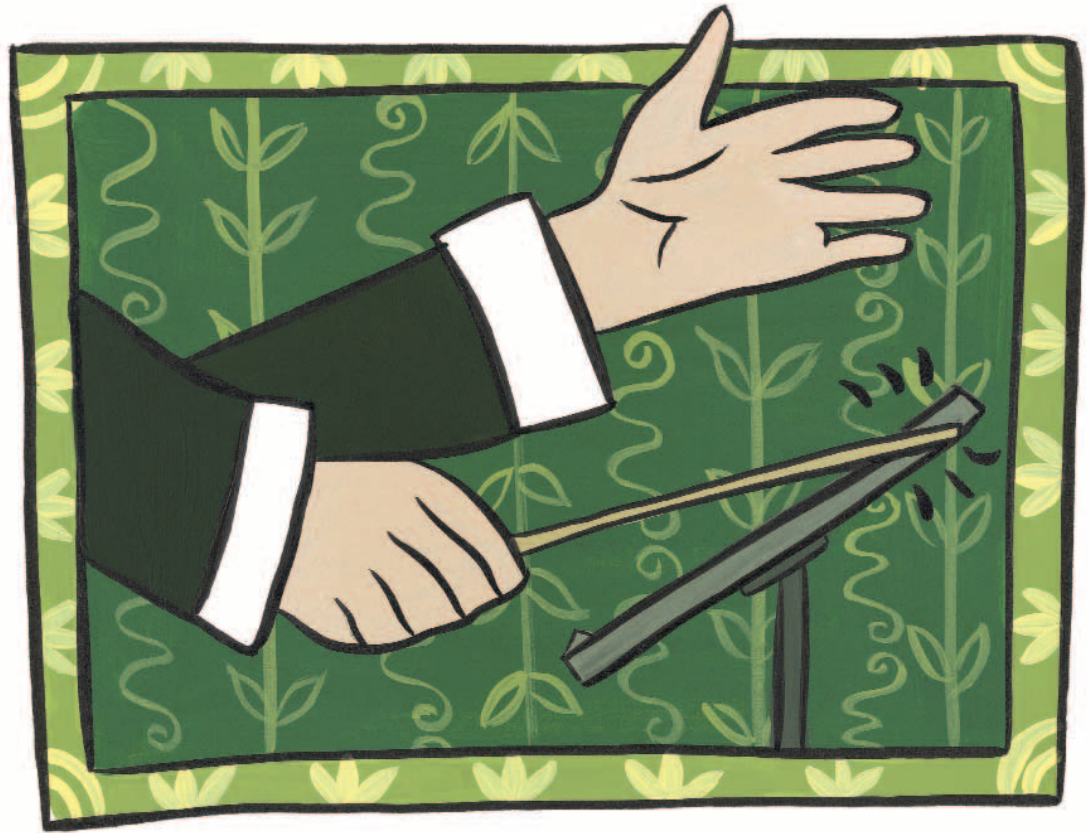
Upon assembling the team, the artist manager works with the artist to develop a career strategy or game plan. With input from the artist manager and team members, the artist must decide on a course of action that will help the

artist reach his or her goals for success. Is the artist more comfortable as a live performer requiring more time in the studio to learn recording techniques, or is the artist primarily a recording artist who will need extensive practice performing before touring?

Because the definition of success varies from team to team, or artist to artist, quarterbacks and artist managers must assess success based on the specific expectations of the artist and his or her team. Does the artist want to maintain a successful regional following by releasing albums on an independent record label, or will the artist feel like a failure unless he or she achieves international fame? Similarly, is a quarterback part of a team whose primary goal is to make it to the playoffs each year, or is the only goal to win the Super Bowl and anything less viewed as a failure?

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plan, unexpected situations may surface that put a wrinkle in the plans. Joe Montana was known for possessing the ability to “fly by the seat of his pants.” Just as Montana was ready to change a play at the line based on defensive shifts or missed calls, the artist manager needs to possess a certain level of spontaneity to deal with such problems as ineffective sound systems, weather-induced no-shows, and the artist’s laryngitis.

The best attribute an artist manager can learn from the quarterback is belief in miracles.

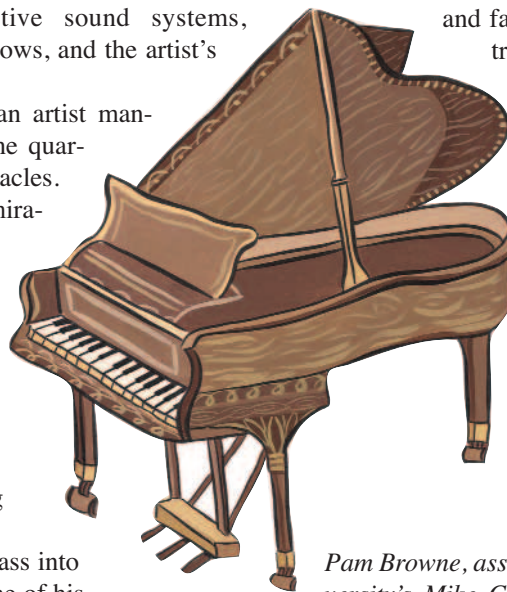
The two greatest “miracles” in football history involved quarterback Doug Flutie. The first miracle occurred during his senior year at Boston College. His team was trailing and the game seemed over, but Doug sought a miracle and threw a “Hail Mary” pass into the end zone, where one of his teammates caught the ball for the win.

The second miracle, now called the “Music City Miracle,” involved a lateral play by the Tennessee Titans that resulted in a touchdown

and win over Doug Flutie’s team, the Buffalo Bills. In both instances, it took a miracle to win the game. Because an artist’s career is subject to the whims of fans, the criticism of the music industry, and often personal adversity, miraculous circumstances may be an important component of success.

Many recording artists recount their tales of miraculous discoveries, career boosts, and fan support in spite of industry criticism. Just as Doug Flutie’s “Hail Mary” and the Titans’ “Music City Miracle” were two spontaneous plays in the face of adversity, the artist manager should be open to the unexpected and try for a few miracles on behalf of the artist.

As a famous saying goes, “you can’t win if you don’t play, and it sometimes takes a miracle to win.” ■



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