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# **Coping with Narcissism: Causes, Effects, and Solutions for the Artist Manager**

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*The people that you've been before  
that you don't want around anymore,  
they push and shove and won't bend to your will  
...I'll keep them still.*

Elliott Smith, "Between the Bars"

There is a morbid fascination with the spectacular crash of celebrity in our culture. Examples abound of television documentaries and motion pictures that share a common plot regarding artists in the entertainment industry: the lean years of sacrifice provide an opportunity for success which then gives way to entitlement, hubris, alcohol and drug use all followed by a spectacular crash—and in some cases a reckoning and comeback. Are unwitting artists doomed to follow this pre-written script? Or is this a ready-made plot on which scriptwriters fall back like some crutch? This article looks at artistic development as a negotiation between an innate sense of self and a more commercial one. We will give special attention to live performance as an area of activity that presents psychological pitfalls to the artist. We will use theories of narcissism to reveal how fragile self-esteem can lead to the self-destructive behaviors too commonly found among artists who achieve, but are unable to sustain, success. Ultimately, an understanding of the psychology at work in this all too familiar scenario benefits us with solid remedies.

We will begin by considering how popular artists are increasingly required to go out on tour in order to remain professionally viable. While the financial necessities of this move are clear to see, the psychology of the road will be revealed as profoundly disruptive with regard to the way people derive an idea of their own identity. Psychological theories of multiple selves allow us to reconsider the stage as a site of a double performance:

the outward, musical one as well as another, inward performance—that of adopting the stage persona. While multiple selves is a natural result of anyone who derives a sense of who he or she is from multiple areas of involvement (i.e., family, work, hobbies, etc.), narcissism is a result of the mismanagement or imbalance of these multiple selves that often leads to a mistaking of oneself for someone or something else. We will consider this psychological loss of self as an initial problem opening the door to potentially severe physical effects, including drug abuse, aggression, difficulty maintaining relationships, and even death. By identifying a clear cause of these problems, this article emphasizes the important role of managers in the maintenance of artists' psychological health. Recommendations for this include ensuring the artist has avenues outside of the entertainment industry for deriving a sense of self as well as the frequent discussion of the relationship between the actual and desired states of the artist's career.

### The Plight of the Artist

The abundant images of prosperity found in the media feed our culture's fascination with celebrity. The image of stardom in the entertainment industry is built up by everything from celebrity-oriented shows on prime time television to long- and short-form music videos, the nightly news, and so on. Together, these media often present a polarized view favoring either of two extremes: an ideal lifestyle of financial independence, the most lavish real estate, jewelry, clothing, transportation, and social amenities or substance abuse, entitlement, bankruptcy, and rehab. On the one hand, celebrity has been built up by a constant succession of images of unlimited access to beautiful things and beautiful people. On the other, it is no surprise when we realize that the image does not agree with the reality. The stories of artists who have literally gone broke trying to live up to the image of celebrity are almost as abundant as the images of celebrities themselves. MC Hammer, Burt Reynolds, Nasir "Nas" Jones, Kim Basinger, Rick Ross, and Mike Tyson are among a long list of stars who spent what many consider obscene amounts before filing for bankruptcy. Looking specifically at the plight of the recording artist who has not crossed over into large-scale celebrity, we find a rather limited number of options for making a living, much less for achieving financial independence. As Geoffrey Hull points out, there are three basic ways to make money in the recording industry: songwriting, live performance, and record sales.<sup>1</sup> Particularly illuminating is Hull's portrayal of an artist with

a gold record and a bounced check.<sup>2</sup> The point being that, due to the nature of record contracts, artists cannot depend on record sales for much in the way of direct income. Policies of recoupment, cross-collateralization, and controlled compositions—as well as the litany of royalty deductions—all work to ensure that artists receive little beyond the initial advance. In short, record companies are in business to sell records, not pay artists.

Nor does songwriting have any guaranteed income for artists. At the heart of this stream of income is the song as a musical composition (as opposed to a sound recording). The owner of the song has the right to collect royalties from its use by record companies who record it, broadcasters who transmit or “perform” it, film or television producers who synchronize it to video, etc. Here we find recording artists at least twice removed from any claim of ownership of the songs they perform on record. Artists are under the employ of the record company, and the record company is licensing the rights from the song’s copyright owner (typically a music publisher and/or songwriter). Artists with the skill and savvy to better position themselves in the royalty stream can do so by recording their own compositions. However, there are many obstacles in the way of this technique working well for artists’ financial needs, not the least of which are the record companies and music publishers themselves. If an artist has the skill to write songs, the record company often has considerable input on the choice of material to record. If the company does allow the artist to record his or her own works, it can use its leverage to gain either songwriting or publishing interest, or to reduce the mechanical royalty rate paid out to the artist as songwriter. Furthermore it is not a given that artists who are already established songwriters will have a controlling interest in their own music publishing. The contracts that bind songwriters to music publishers are well versed in ways to wrestle copyright ownership away from the singer-songwriter and thereby reduce any potential income by one half or more. Like record sales, songwriting then provides little promise for artists seeking financial independence.

This leaves us with the final major stream of income: live performance. The pages that follow will develop the importance of this setting from a psychological perspective. At this point, let us recognize that live performance represents a path that many artists simply must travel in order to remain professionally viable. This may seem like a strange statement given the exuberance many artists show while performing. However, it is also important to recognize the confinement this path comes to represent

over time.

## Reflectors and Identity: A Theory of Reflection

In order to understand the psychological impact of an artist primarily invested in live performance, let us consider a theory of how people develop an idea of who they are. Such a theory will allow us to understand the idea of how an innate (natural, biographical) self-concept can be displaced by a more commercial (artificial, sales-oriented) one.

The idea that other people contribute to an individual's idea of who he or she is, is a generally accepted premise in contemporary psychology. By the mid-1900s, it is already a component of theories of the self as developed by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and others.<sup>3</sup> While the subtleties of these developments are beyond the scope of the current article, there are a few points that we can take away for the purposes at hand. For example, the idea of "reflection" is implied by Lacan's work on "the mirror stage."<sup>4</sup> Let us borrow the premise that people develop a sense of self by identifying with others who provide feedback, or "reflection," in order to apply it to the study of the musical artist reliant on live performance. This idea of reflection points to the power of objects (including people) to support and inform someone's idea of who he or she is. From this perspective, consider the difference between the types of reflectors common to childhood development as opposed to those common to the environment of the larger music industry. The first we will refer to as "natural reflectors" and the second as "commercial reflectors."

As an example, let us use childhood development as an initial application of this theory. Parents, family, and friends serve as natural reflectors. At early stages, children have a sense of themselves as good or bad based on the way family members reflect ("react to" or "represent") the child's respect for the values and limits important to the family. Once the child has reached the age to begin socializing, the other acquaintances made outside of the home will then react to the child by referring to their own sets of values and limits. Based on the agreement or disagreement of these two groups of values, the child may be accepted or marginalized by its peers. One way or the other, youngsters typically have an initial concept of self in place by the age of six or seven years.<sup>5</sup> By this time, the values and limits of the parents as they are represented by the child have been reflected by the peers and the child is able to either adjust or not, based on the need or desire for acceptance. Finally, just as this initial self-

concept was developed by way of negotiating between parental, sibling, and peer reflections, it should not be suggested that the concept is fixed or unchangeable at any point. Rather, identity as we have theorized it here is but a starting point whose development is a matter of constant negotiation.

Looking now at the commercial system of reflectors as they are established in the music industry, there are some interesting points of comparison and contrast. On the one hand, the commercial environment is like the child who desires acceptance inasmuch as both are concerned with the creation of an idealized image. The effort to construct a commercial image is however much more explicit in that it involves entire business entities whose fortunes are tied up with the success or failure of the artist as a commodity. Record labels, talent agencies, artist management agencies, concert promoters, and publicity firms represent a sample of these corporate structures devoted to the creation and exploitation of an idealized version of the performer as artist. It follows that the objects and people professionally associated with these businesses all endorse or ratify this artificially constructed image to the extent that their goal is to create desire on the part of the public. While the theoretical structures are similar in that they both tend to generate an idealized image, their means of elaboration are significantly different. One involves an interior, imaginative process as opposed to the use of external materials and business agendas to act on the imagination and desire of the consumer.

A second point that merits attention is the fact that the commercial system of reflection as enacted by live performance works to the exclusion of the natural reflectors. The fact that touring is a fundamental requirement of the live performance sector of the music industry means that the artist is required to be away from home and thus outside of the system of natural reflectors for extended periods of time. So, when artists are on tour, they are enveloped in a seductive world of artificial reflectors designed to create desire in the mind of the observer. Furthermore, the presence of any of the natural reflectors is restricted to the presence of family and friends on any given show or tour. The effect of this dynamic is that the artist's psyche is under a constant barrage of commercial reflectors without the grounding influence of family and friends to remind the artist of his or her core identity, and thereby counteract the influence of the commercial environment.

## Stage as Double Spectacle

When we consider the live performance venue at the time of the performance, it is a space saturated with objects that reflect the commercial image. From the marquee to the tickets themselves, the merchandise for sale including programs, CDs, and T-shirts to promotional materials like posters, banners, and logos are all tied into the commercial image by way of photos, copy, color palette, font, etc. The venue is also a focal point of advertising and promotional efforts well in advance of the show. All of this is a concerted effort to seduce the public by branding a desirable image into its imagination. The stage set itself is a sort of ritual space, carefully prepared and controlled to ensure that only an optimized version of the artist is on display.

The stage on which the live performance takes place merits special consideration as the site where the battle for the artist's own self-concept reaches a decisive moment. The performance is in fact decisive for several reasons: does the show work from the standpoint of the technical production, the performance of the musicians, ticket sales, merchandise, etc.? On the level of psychology however, the performance is a ritual since artists must be in character, consistently ready to present a version of themselves intended for spectacular, public consumption. From the perspective of our current study, the performance is one of the relatively infrequent moments created precisely for the artist to wear the purely commercial identity like a mask. It is, after all, a theatrical performance in the general sense of the term. The stage is thus the site of a double performance: an outward delivery of musical entertainment as well as the artists who, psychologically stepping into character, cover over their natural identities with the commercial ones provided to them. However closely the outward spectacle may be controlled and secured, there are fewer safeguards monitoring the inner performance. There is no way to ensure that the repetitive "stepping into character" does not result in the artist's loss of who he or she really is.

Erving Goffman's oft-cited work entitled *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* uses theatrical performance as a metaphor to make larger psychological observations. For example, he uses the term "front" for the process of getting into character, or what we have been referring to as the application of the commercial image. Goffman also uses venue-based metaphors to describe the way that people divide social and private spaces as "front stage" and "back stage" respectively. The former is the place of performance (whether literally, like a concert, or figuratively like a din-

ner party); it is described as a highly controlled zone that only reflects the way the performers wish to be observed. On the other hand, the backstage is a place of planning, rehearsing, and strategizing the show. It is also described as a private space where the performer can “relax, drop his front, forget about speaking his lines and step out of character.”<sup>6</sup> When we apply this distinction to the concert scenario, the intuitive assumption that the “backstage” works to protect the artist’s innate or natural self concept begins to break down. While it is possible that the artist can enjoy some privacy, the typical scene backstage at a concert is often far from private. Intimate access to the artist is a valuable commodity that is often leveraged to court sponsors, reward broadcast partners or lucky fans, or to size up the evening’s romantic possibilities. Even in the absence of these privacy invaders, the acts of planning, rehearsing, or strategizing the show all require focus to be placed on the successful delivery of the commercial image. The live performance venue is therefore a space that is over-determined with reflectors of a single identity—that of the idealized, commercial image.

In popular culture, the live performance can also be analyzed as a subversive ritual. As historians like Natalie Z. Davis have observed about early-modern European culture, annual popular festivals have worked for centuries on the premise of reversing the social and political order.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, modern large-scale outdoor concerts—especially those of the late 1960s and 70s, were often called “counter-cultural” for the same reason. On the psychological level as well, the live performance threatens to reverse the established dominance of the innate or natural identity over any potential masks one may temporarily wear. From this perspective, the concert is potentially a revolutionary event not just by association with some counter-cultural youth movement. Implicitly, there is also the threat of an upset or reverse of the established psychological order of self-concept by 180 degrees.

Within the context of a tour, the live show is a repetitive event. It immerses the artist in an environment saturated with contrived, commercial reflectors on a regular basis and with limited grounding effect of the artist’s natural reflectors. While the commercial reflectors represent the most seductive version of the artist, the fact of repetition itself would work to both normalize this process of redefinition and thereby render the artist progressively less and less sensitive to it. Add to this the dynamic effect caused by the audience members who appeal directly to the artist as an

idealized image. The average ticket buyer brings a preconceived notion of the artist delivered through album packaging, other merchandise, advertising, and the like. The fan applauds the efforts of the artist and encourages the growth of this artist-as-commodity. “Super-fans”—as presented by Waddell, *et al.*, spend extra for seating as close as possible to the artist, close enough for the artist to make eye contact and recognize their gaze.<sup>8</sup>

From the psychoanalytic perspective, the idea of the gaze has received some important attention. Lacan’s famous description of the gaze as it acts upon the identity of the subject (our “artist”) is especially to the point in the present context:

Is it not clear that the gaze intervenes here only in as much as it is [...] the subject sustaining himself in a function of desire? [...] The gaze is the object on which depends the fantasy from which the subject suspends in an essential vacillation.<sup>9</sup>

According to Lacan, the gaze raises the stakes of the precarious game of identity to another level. It is no longer a question of knowing that one is being observed along with the resulting expansion of the Ego. Rather this points to a moment in which the artist sees that he or she is being observed and knows that the observer is looking with desire. The danger is clear if artists mistake the version of themselves reflected in the gaze as their actual identity. To describe the danger at hand, Lacan uses the French term *méconnaissance* (“misunderstanding” or, better yet, “mistaken identity”). This is the mistaking of one’s self for an idealized construct reflected in the eyes of an adoring observer. Furthermore, the use of the term “essential vacillation” underscores that part of the subject’s core identity is in limbo. In this scenario, any former self-concept is replaced by the exclusively positive idea that he or she is “the desired one.” In other words, mistaken identity is potentially a negative by-product or sign of a successful marketing campaign.

Psychologically speaking, the result of such mistaken identity is an upheaval, reversal, or subversion of the self-concept. The natural order is upset and the unnatural, contrived image becomes dominant. To borrow once again from Lacan, this is the catastrophic failure of the subject as it had been arranged, the point at which the innate self-concept is subsumed by the character mask and vanishes.

From the moment that this gaze appears, the subject tries to adapt himself to it, he becomes that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being with which the subject confuses his own failure.<sup>10</sup>

The passage above portrays the substitution or “mistaken identity” as a theoretical process at its completion. Lacan’s description effectively supports our theory of psychological seduction in which the ultimate loss of self is preceded by a confusion. Namely, the subject (our “artist”) vanishes in its attempt to conform (or “adapt”) to the gaze and the artificial image it carries. Here, we can imagine our hypothetical artist returning from a prolonged tour to the sobering remarks of friends and family alike: “I think I recognize you, but something has changed.”

### Narcissus and the Dangers of Multiple Selves

Following the work of William James, contemporary psychology has expanded on the notion of multiple selves.<sup>11</sup> Goffman’s idea of intentionally presented versions of the self versus less staged versions is but one example. Another one is the idea of self-complexity.<sup>12</sup> Individuals with high self-complexity are involved in many roles and therefore have multiple avenues from which to derive a sense of who they are. This is seen as stabilizing inasmuch as a setback in any single area of involvement has less effect on the overall self-concept. On the other hand, individuals with low self-complexity are more vulnerable to setbacks because they are more invested in fewer areas. Another application of the idea of multiple selves is that of compartmentalization and integration.<sup>13</sup> If “compartmentalized” people have a positive and a negative concept for the same event (i.e., me as a singer, me late for sound check), “integrated” people allow for positive and negative ideas to coexist in the same category (i.e., I am a singer who is sometimes late for sound check). The unhealthy, exclusively positive self-identification as *the desired one* is thus an example of someone whose self-concept is overly compartmentalized and insufficiently integrated.

Perhaps the most visible expression of the idea of multiple selves is narcissism. This term is tied to an ancient Egyptian myth that made its way into western thought thanks largely to the Roman poet Ovid. The myth tells the story of a young boy whose beauty was matched only by his cold natured rejection of his many suitors. Captivated by his own reflection in

a pool, Narcissus falls in love with it and essentially dies from his own, unrequited love, of himself. Thanks to its own internal justice, the myth provides us with a sort of symbol of the returns of excessive self-love. Recognized by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) as a personality disorder in 1980, today narcissism is defined as:

A pervasive pattern of grandiosity and self-importance characterized by arrogant or haughty behaviors, feelings of entitlement, a lack of empathy and a willingness to exploit others.<sup>14</sup>

A list of associated behaviors is also indicated by the APA. These include aggression, self enhancement, and problems with interpersonal relationships. In the last decade or so, the idea of narcissism has been nuanced by that of multiple selves to explain the frequent coexistence of both a grandiose as well as very vulnerable self-concepts among narcissists.<sup>15</sup> These attributes work in lockstep as they push narcissists to constantly seek self-affirming feedback from their social environments. For any performing artist with these traits, touring would clearly present a precarious environment since it is replete with such self-affirming feedback. The question then becomes, “Which version of ‘self’ is being affirmed?” The situation becomes more precarious given that the need for affirmation is in overdrive since the “grandiose” and “exploitative” aspects of narcissists tend to push away the very people from whom they crave respect and admiration.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, let us recognize the theme of emotional instability or fragility that ties together many of the character traits discussed above. Some psychologists believe this fragility comes from a disagreement when the sense of self that is derived from one’s explicit thoughts about oneself doesn’t line up with the sense that comes from one’s implicit life experience.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the disagreement between the idealized versus the actual self is thought to create a doubtful and therefore fragile concept of self. This fragility appears to be heightened in compartmentalized individuals with low self-complexity. We will recall that compartmentalized people can be at affective extremes because that is how they organize themselves: all good versions of me doing *A*, or all bad versions of me doing *A*. When *A* is one of the few options that the subject actually does, it is no surprise to find, as Virgil Zeigler-Hill does, that “[This] segregation of positive and

negative attributes may lead narcissists to be particularly reactive to events that increase the salience of their all-good or all-bad self aspects.”<sup>18</sup>

## Managing Artist Health

The experience of success in the entertainment industry is poorly understood for many reasons. On one hand, “making it” as an entertainer is something that appeals to many people who know little about what is involved to achieve that success.<sup>19</sup> On the other, the percentage of those who actually achieve any real success in this highly competitive field is very small.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, it is crucial to differentiate between those who momentarily break through the industry gatekeepers (the infamous “one hit wonders”) and those with staying power. It is important to recognize members of the latter group as having some coping skills that allow them to turn an opportunity into a career. In this final section, let us indicate how narcissism provides a link between mental imbalance and physical self-destruction before pointing out a few preventative measures that can contribute to longevity.

To this point, the current article has been focused on the danger of artists who gets caught up and seduced by the projection and reflection of this unnatural image to the point of potentially mistaking it for their own identity. This is the essential loss of self theorized by Lacan as a “vanishing” in his description of the gaze. Let us consider this psychological loss as one that brings others in its wake. Returning to the myth of Narcissus shows the tragic and violent consequences of this loss of self.

But as wax melts before a gentle fire  
Or morning frosts beneath the rising sun,  
So, by love wasted, slowly he dissolves  
By hidden fire consumed. No color now,  
Blending the white with red [...]  
(Ovid, *Metamorphoses III*. 486-490)

Taken from Ovid’s account, the passage above describes the passing of Narcissus whose inability to possess his reflection leads him to start tearing himself apart: *Then in his grief he tore his robe and beat/ His cold fists on his pale and naked breast*, (ll. 478-479). Interestingly, it is upon seeing the effects of the self-destruction reflected in the image that the boy proceeds to tear himself apart (c.f., ll. 486-490, *supra*). The seductive

power of the image and the destructive power of the gaze are powerfully emphasized in the last words: *His latest words, gazing and gazing still/ He sighed "Alas! The boy I loved in vain,"* (ll. 499-500). It is in the process of following the image that Narcissus loses himself, literally by tearing himself apart. In other words, the physical self-destruction follows from the psychological (mis)taking of the image as real.

Returning to the specific plight of the artist in the music industry, this myth is very telling in light of the psychology we have already outlined. The most striking similarities are the seductive power of the image and the tragic self-destruction that follows. Furthermore, the resemblance to Aristotle's description of tragedy as a fall from renown brought about by an original mistake lends this self-destruction the flavor of a Greek tragedy.<sup>22</sup> Preventing this tragic self-destruction is of capital importance to the enterprise of artist management. Although the moment of the "loss of self" as we have theorized it may very well be the hidden counterpart of the super-visible live performance, the effects of this loss are often apparent and explicit. The litany of self-destructive behaviors so strongly associated with the "rock star" lifestyle are well-known and constantly reinforced by contemporary media. It is not our goal to presume that this idea of mistaken identity is the sole reason for drug use, alcoholism, promiscuity, tobacco use, or any of the other related behaviors. Clearly, a big part is simply the folly of youth exacerbated by what seems like endless wealth. Another interesting part of it is the conscious effort to spend that wealth in order to live up to the image associated with this lifestyle.

This "all too common story" is the one with which we began: spending obscene amounts of money, the spectacular crash of celebrity, etc. After looking at some of the psychology involved in a lifestyle that largely requires live performance and its associated dangers, the spectacular crash of celebrity now appears under a different light. Namely, the self-destructive behaviors may very well begin as a seductive part of the image of success. If and when that image has been mistaken for the artist's actual identity, drugs, alcohol, and other addictions can provide a numbing escape from the existential pain of having lost one's "natural" identity. Inasmuch as recreational drug use is first and foremost an effort to change oneself, it can also be seen as mirroring, if not signifying the larger psychological loss of self. Any and all of these possible explanations support our larger reading that addiction is a primary vehicle by which an artist may be said to imitate or follow the example of Narcissus. It is the process of follow-

ing a beautiful illusion to the point of tearing oneself apart. It is a gradual self-destruction that can closely resemble that of the mythological boy: cocaine use to the point of dissolving nasal membranes, disintegration of the arteries, methamphetamine use breaking down the skin (*blending the white with the red*) and progressively stripping away dental enamel so the teeth dissolve *as wax melts before a gentle fire*.

And so, what of the plight of the artist manager? Clearly, with no artist there is nothing to manage. Beyond this cold pragmatic truth, it is important to underline the often tight-knit relationship between artist and manager. This relationship is at the center of a swirling storm of various long- and short-term associates whose own livelihoods depend on the success of the artist. Whereas many of these associates (should) maintain a largely business-like relationship with the artist, the artist manager is, in many senses, a manager of the artist's personal life. In fact, the personal manager, as they are often called, may need to fill the grounding function of family and friends who are often excluded from the artist's life of constant travel. So what pieces of solid advice can a manager take from this study?

First of all, it is important to encourage what we have called "high self complexity." In layman's terms, this means that artists are psychologically more vulnerable when they have all their eggs in one basket as it were. It is therefore important to encourage artists to explore other areas of interest that are not based on their lives in the entertainment industry. Hobbies, sports, and education are some examples that are relatively flexible. Others, like starting a family, may provide an excellent source of identity despite requiring greater effort and compromise to integrate into a travel-based lifestyle. Another important technique is to dissuade what we have called "contingent self-esteem." This is the idea that feelings of self-worth are based on the ability to meet self-imposed standards of performance. This issue gets to the heart of one of the most important elements of artist management—goal setting. As Frascogna and Hetherington observe, it is important for goals to be set properly, not too high and not too low.<sup>23</sup> The right type of goal and the ability to link short-, medium-, and long-term goals will encourage a sense of purpose, direction, and attainability. This "self clarity"—to borrow a term from the psychologists, is an important weapon against the inevitable setbacks to the career. Finally, managers should try to ensure an integrated, as opposed to a compartmentalized, sense of self. We will remember that this opposition refers to the way peo-

ple organize their various “selves.” Compartmentalization occurs when at least two selves exist for each area of involvement: a positive self and a negative one. The idea here is to encourage an integrated sense of self to maintain a better psychological balance so that the artist doesn’t finally become one or the other (the object of luck that is always bad, or someone who is always entitled to the best in every situation). The reality of the world is that good and bad things happen to all of us and self-concept should reflect that simple truth. This is of crucial importance with respect to longevity in the entertainment industry. As Zeigler-Hill indicates,

[...] because integration keeps both positive and negative self-beliefs in mind, it may be a relatively realistic representation of self, with specific advantages for adjustment (e.g., resilience), even though self esteem may be moderate.<sup>24</sup>

In stark opposition to fragility, this “resilience” is an ideal trait to foster longevity in the entertainment industry, and Zeigler-Hill firmly anchors this trait in a balanced view of the self.

A final technique we can suggest for preventing identity problems in artists is for managers to find ways to get in touch with how artists see themselves as well as how they feel they are doing from day to day. This allows for managers to assess how much an artist’s ideal self coincides with the actual self. When the versions of self that proceed from these two sources consistently disagree, there is “self discrepancy,” an important symptom indicating that there are identity issues going on. Keeping track of self discrepancy is just as essential as keeping an eye on the financial bottom line. Congruent self-esteem, or the healthy relationship between these two ideas indicates that the way artists feel about themselves from day to day basically agrees with how they picture themselves relative to their goals, the development of their careers—in short, the way things are supposed to be going. Once a fissure develops between these two ideas of self, an entire set of negative behaviors becomes one step closer to reality. While it is clearly too optimistic to think that things will always be perceived as going the way they should (especially according to the artists themselves), the overarching point is that it behooves the manager to breach the topic frequently. This is exactly the kind of knowledge that will enable managers to effectively ground their artists, keeping them on

track, allowing them to vent frustrations, and giving the team a chance to update goals, fine tune the career plan, and keep the relationship as well as the career, alive and healthy.

## Endnotes

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1. Geoffrey Hull, *The Recording Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.
2. Ibid., 148-149.
3. e.g., Henri Wallon (1879-1962), Thomas H. Ogden (1948-).
4. Initially described as a stage of childhood development between what he calls the “infant stage” and the stage at which identity becomes subject to social determination, this theory was later conceived as a basic part of human psychology. The basic premise is that people use others as mirrors to construct an idealized sense of who they are.
5. Lan Nguyen Chaplin and Deborah Roedder John, “The Development of Self-Brand Connections in Children and Adolescents,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, forthcoming.
6. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 112.
7. Natalie Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: University Press, 1975), 97ff.
8. Ray Waddell, et al., *Concert Promotion and Touring: A Practical Guide to Creating, Selling, Organizing and Staging Concerts* (New York: Billboard Books, 2007), 201-203.
9. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton & Co., 1978), 83-85.
10. Ibid., 83.
11. See Henri James, *The Principals of Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1963).
12. See P. W. Linville, “Self Complexity and Affective Extremity: Don’t Put All Your Cognitive Eggs in One Basket,” *Social Cognition* 3 (1985): 94-120.
13. See C. J. Showers, “Compartmentalization and Integration: A Model of Self-Structure and Self-Change” in *Advances in Personality Science*, ed. D. Cervone and W. Mischel (New York: Guilford Press, 2002).
14. See Virgil Zeigler-Hill and Erin M. Meyers, “The Fragile Self Esteem of Narcissists” in *Personality Disorders: New Research*, ed. J. C. Hagan and E. I. Jensen (New York: Nova Science Publishers,

- 2008), 1-18.
15. See C. C. Morf and F. Rhodewalt, "Unraveling the Paradoxes of Narcissism: A Dynamic, Self-Regulatory Processing Model," *Psychological Inquiry* 12 (2001): 177-196.
  16. This juxtaposition of contradictory traits (grandiose, vulnerable) has occupied much of the most recent work on narcissism. Otto Kernberg's *psychodynamic mask model* states that the overt grandiosity of narcissists is but a façade to disguise underlying insecurity and inferiority, (see O. F. Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1975)). The idea of contingent self esteem suggests that the narcissist's feelings of self worth are based on their ability to meet specific high standards thereby establishing their superiority over others, (M. H. Kernis, "Toward a Conceptualization of Optimal Self-Esteem," *Psychological Inquiry* 14 (2003): 1-26). Virgil Zeigler-Hill argues that narcissism has more to do with basing feelings of self worth on achievements in specific areas of endeavor in order to win the favor of certain observers, (Virgil Zeigler-Hill and Erin M. Meyers, op. cit., 8). These achievements assume an even greater importance if the subject has low self-complexity meaning that the success or failure of any given performance will have a greater overall impact on self-worth as there are few areas of involvement.
  17. This is the idea of "discrepancy," c.f.: V. Zeigler-Hill and C. H. Jordan, "Behind the Mask: Narcissism and Implicit Self-Esteem" in *Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings and Treatment*, ed. W. K. Campbell and J. Miller, forthcoming, 14.
  18. *Ibid.*, 11.
  19. Other reasons may include the paucity of resources dedicated to this still young academic discipline, the lack of perceived need among those already successful to recognize or address success as a problem.
  20. Some estimates of the ratio between the number of solicited demos reviewed and the number of records signed by a major label annually are about 500 to 1.
  21. See for example John Oldham and Lois Morris, *Personality Self-Portrait: Why You Think, Love, Work and Act the Way You Do* (New York: Bantam, 1995).

22. According to Aristotle, tragedy involves a reversal of fortune of someone who “must be highly renowned and prosperous” whose “misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity but by some error or frailty.” Aristotle, *Poetics* XIII. 1453a10. 5-10.
23. Xavier M. Frascogna and H. Lee Hetherington, *This Business of Artist Management* (New York: Billboard Books, 2004), 93, 94ff.
24. C. J. Showers, A. Limke and V. Zeigler-Hill, “Self-Structure and Self-Change: Applications to Psychological Treatment,” *Behavior Therapy* 35 (2004): 167-184.

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