

GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR MUSIC VIDEO PITCHING PROCESS

The following are suggested best practices for labels, artists, music video reps, directors, and production companies when initiating a music video project. They are based on precedent already established in other media production industries. The nature of music video production requires a certain degree of flexibility, so while every company will make their own decision as best suits their business model, these are suggested guidelines to make the process more respectful and efficient for everyone involved.

- I. TREATMENT POOL SELECTION PROCESS** - A suggested music video pitching process consisting of three phases that whittle down the pool of possible directors, so as to limit the number of directors committing time to writing full treatments without compensation.

*(NOTE): This three step pitching process was designed to ensure the Artist and Artist Representative will receive enough ideas to select from, while limiting the number of directors who must complete a treatment to a maximum of 5. We acknowledge that there are other ways to get similar results. **Since these are merely suggested guidelines, as long as the process limits the number of directors writing full treatments to below 5, the spirit of these guidelines are still upheld.***

- A. Interest Phase: The selection process begins with the brief.¹ The artist representative should ideally send **artist-approved creative briefs** to see if director has creative interest and is available. Artist representatives should do their due diligence to ensure that the budget range realistically reflects the creative brief so as to manage expectations.

Interest Phase Pool Size: There should be no limit to the number of directors solicited during the interest phase.

- B. Concept Phase: Once the pool of interested directors is collected, we recommend the artist/label request a Concept Document from each director that is no more than one page long. These would not be fully formed ideas or treatments, but simple text documents containing a few concepts and/or a few images. These Concept Documents are meant to give the Label and/or Artist a chance to see if the Director's visual or conceptual idea(s) align with the Artist's vision, before the Director invests more time into a fully formed treatment with text, images, and references.

(NOTE): The precedent here comes from writers' rooms and ad agencies. Before anyone is expected to write a fully formed script, the writer(s) pitch an approach or concept to minimize wasted time.

Additional Benefits of Concept Phase: The concept phase shortens the time it takes directors to submit ideas and helps commissioners sift through submissions at a much quicker rate. Eliminating the requirement of a treatment up front gives directors more time to write original ideas (rather than recycling old treatments) and will encourage more established directors to pitch on open calls. With more ideas coming in, artists will have a greater chance of receiving a music video idea that they truly love.

- C. Concept Selection Phase: From this larger pool of ideas, we recommend the Artist select 1-5 ideas that best align with the Artist's vision. These Director(s) will create treatments for their ideas and make up the final Treatment Pool.

¹ "Brief" - any suggested concepts or creative references, a proposed timeline, release date, and budget range.



Concept Selection Phase Treatment Pool Size: If more than 5 Directors are selected for the pool, the Artist/Label should alert all participating parties. Our goal is to limit the number of complete treatments written for free by prospective directors. If more than 5 treatments are requested, we recommend compensating the writers (including when the same director(s) writes multiple treatments based on different briefs for the same track).

Additional Benefits of Concept Selection Phase: A smaller treatment pool size incentivizes directors to invest more time and energy into creating exceptional treatments by assuring them that their work will be seen and considered, thus motivating them to thoroughly engage with the project.

II. BRIEFING CALL

- A. Creative Call: After the treatment pool is selected, we recommend that the Label (Music Video Commissioner), an Artist Representative (e.g. manager, band member if available) and Director (with a representative of production if 'signed') hold a creative call before the treatment is put together. This will help ensure everyone is on the same page. During the creative call, we recommend transparency about the project's history (have they sought treatments before, was a video made and shelved, etc.).

Additional Benefits of Creative Call: It is very likely that new and exciting ideas will emerge during this call that will lead to a more fully realized video concept that the artist and director are eager to work on together. Increased communication will also result in greater confidence that the director can execute their video concept for the given budget.

III. TREATMENT SUBMISSION

- A. Treatment: Each director in the Treatment Pool is now expected to create a treatment based on their concept and creative conversation with the Artist Representative. A treatment customarily includes (1) text outlining the video concept and how it will be executed and (2) images and reference videos.
- B. Transparency: We suggest the label inform all parties of the other directors' names and/or the number of directors who are creating treatments.
- C. Timeline: We recommend that each Director is given at minimum four full business days to complete a treatment.

IV. TREATMENT FOLLOW UP

- A. Follow-up Call: We recommend that the Label and Artist Rep schedule a follow-up call for each director to walk them through the treatment. This is an opportunity for the Artist or Artist Rep to discuss ideas presented in the treatment with the director to ensure the final product is aligned with the Artist's goals. This call may lead to treatment revisions.
- B. Production Call: Once the Artist or Artist Rep has decided which treatment(s) they are most interested in pursuing, a representative from the director and the label should hold a production call to discuss schedule, and other logistical concerns to ensure that the idea as pitched is feasible for the budget and time constraints.

(NOTE): Detailed budget submissions should not be expected until the artist or artist rep has selected the treatment they want to produce.



C. Treatment Revisions: We suggest no more than one round of ‘unpaid’ revisions and one set of ‘unpaid’ tweaks to those revisions. If the revisions create significant changes to schedule, budget and/or other production logistics, we recommend an additional follow-up call.

V. **AWARD PROCESS** - Once Label and Artist decide who to hire, we recommend all parties be immediately notified, *including directors not chosen*, ideally within two business days.

VI. **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY** - For video concepts not selected, the ideas and executions herein are the property of the director. In the event the copyright to an artist or company’s pitch materials and treatments (the “Materials”) is assigned to a company through an NDA or other legally binding agreement, that company is free to use in whole or in part the Materials but must notify the artist and company in writing and pay a usage fee to be negotiated between the parties in good faith taking into account industry standards and norms.

VII. **INCLUSIVITY & REPRESENTATION** - In our 2019 WDMV music video director survey, 82% of directors identified as male and 80% white. In addition, research from the DGA in 2018 state over 80% of DGA members identified as men and over 90% identified as white. Therefore, due to a lack of representation within the entertainment industry as well as the music video community, we recommend at least one third of interested directors during the “Concept Phase” (Section IB) come from a marginalized community (e.g. women, POC, LGBTQ+, disabled). Given that music videos often help directors break into the industry, this suggestion is an effort to increase inclusion and representation in the entertainment industry as a whole.

(NOTE): The precedent here comes from Free the Bid which strives to increase the representation of women in the commercial industry by advocating for at least one out of three directors pitching on a commercial identify as a woman. In our case, we are expanding this to include all marginalized communities.

****These suggested best practices do not represent any organization, policy or agreement, and each member must make its own independent business decisions on conducting business. These suggested best practices also are not meant to serve as legal advice and individuals are advised to consult with legal counsel in connection with any specific business matter or transaction. These guidelines will be reviewed at least once a year to make sure they accurately reflect the ever-changing media landscape and the current state of the music video industry.****