



FOR STUDENTS : ALL THE INGREDIENTS OF A GOOD ESSAY

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Essay: AC/DC

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From a musical perspective, Australian rock legends AC/DC are known more for their 'mammoth power chords' and influential rock sound rather than the inner workings of the band as business. Founders Angus and Malcolm Young put the band together all the way back in 1973 and established their dominance and rock sound with huge hits such as 'Highway To Hell' and 'High Voltage'. AC/DC never strayed away from their roots as every album and every song near on sounds the same. This wasn't such a bad thing; Millions of fans have and still will buy tickets to see what is left of AC/DC and even the most hardcore fans will say that every song sounds different in some sort of way. AC/DC are also well known for their 'rowdy image, giant riffs and macho lyrics about sex, drinking and damnation...' (Rolling Stone, 2018) and these have aided them on the pathway to being one of the biggest bands in the world. Music at the time of AC/DC's arrival was filled with

punk, metal and progressive rock and in comparison; AC/DC weren't writing music that shifted time signatures or keys. With music that pushed boundaries, it would be hard for this band to make a mark. In time however, this band would become known for more than their simplistic riffs. Angus Young, the band's 'schoolboy' lead guitarist would begin to amaze people with his often chaotic stage antics. Young would also make Chuck Berry's duckwalk even more popular too as this move would accompany every song in some form or another. The albums that this band put out go Platinum pretty quickly but however in contrast, they have never cracked the charts with any singles in America. Angus and Malcolm Young moved from Scotland in 1963. With support from The Easybeats members George Young and Harry Vanda, AC/DC came into their own after finding Bon Scott and recruiting him as the singer. Vanda and Young had already had experience with the Australian music scene and would aid AC/DC on their first four albums. By the end of 1976, AC/DC's third album "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap" arrived in record stores in both Australia and the U.K. They had no problem getting gigs in the U.K as their music wasn't as rowdy as punk etc. 'Let There Be Rock' would also become popular in 1977 and a subsequent support slot with Black Sabbath would eventually follow. Malcolm Young however would encounter conflict with the bassist from Sabbath which would then result in AC/DC being removed from the tour. This combo of AC/DC and the Easybeats would help create the legions of fans in Australia and eventually the U.S with 'Highway to Hell' becoming platinum in 1979. This would all be short lived temporarily as in February 1980, Bon Scott would pass away after a night out drinking heavily. Two months later, he would be replaced by ex-Geordie singer Brian Johnson. These events would lead to the making and release of 'Back In Black' in 1980, it would then go on to sell 22 million copies and become one of the greatest selling albums of all time.

There are a few things that can be observed about the success of AC/DC. This band knows the crowd they are playing too and they for sure know that fans from the 70's are bringing their kids to shows as well which can create a family connection with the fans and the band. Maintaining a consistent sound around bands that changed to fit the trend is bold and 'gutsy' as every album had the risk of being boring and repetitive. The recent addition of their discography online means that they now have multiple streaming services available for fans and/or newcomers alike. Previously, the music was only available through the purchase of physical copies such as CD and Vinyl which typically isn't ideal in this age of digital music. With opportunities to buy CD's etc at concerts, fans also have the ability to purchase various merchandise relating the bands brand such as banners, light up devil horns and inflatable toy guitars and this helps make for an unforgettable live show. In regard to this, AC/DC have worked hard over their career of 40 plus years and that can also be attributed to their success. They consistently deliver an amazing live show which makes the tickets which are valued from \$80-\$150 really worth the money. There is definitely a sense of feeling content knowing that you are going to get your monies worth when you see a live band such as this one.

AC/DC KNOW their own market.

It can be said that AC/DC have released the same album 14 times which in some ways is true but in contrast, it's fair to say; 'Why give up a formula that has worked countless times and still does?'. Though their sound in particular hasn't changed, there were plenty of obvious trends that stick out. MTV was launched in the 1980s and as the world of pop began to rise, AC/DC's music was starting to become stale and dry according to some fans and music lovers alike. This was evident in the 1985 release 'Fly On The Wall' with it receiving mixed reviews and leaving it to be consistently debated to be one of the bands least successful albums. Rolling Stone said 'You'd never guess how sexist and politically incorrect all this is if you didn't read the lyric sheet, because you sure can't make out a single word coming out of the dentist's-drill glottis of Brian Johnson'. (Rolling Stone, 2016). MTV actually embraced the band with music videos for their five singles on the album, all being separately released along with album on VHS. This ended up being an attempt to reconnect to younger audiences as that was crowd watching MTV during the decade. This would work in their favour with some younger fans and this would come into play more with Stephen King and his release of the film 'Maximum Overdrive'. AC/DC would go onto re-record the music video for 'You Shook Me All Night Long'; this received praise from both older and younger/newer fans on the band. After the releases of 'Fly on the Wall'; the band would seek aid from already established producers such as Rick Ruben and Bruce

Fairbairne to oversee the both the music and visual marketing of their future releases. Due to the success of their promotion videos, AC/DC began to pour out singles with music videos attached to them. AC/DC saw an opportunity to attract new fans with MTV and they were quite successful in doing that despite the reviews for the some of the more lacklustre albums in that era from the band. In short, 'Fly on the Wall' helped them a grab the attention of the younger generation of America and this in turn would help the band in its next three releases. The album peaked in the US at #32 and would eventually become Platinum after the MTV exposure, slow album sales and subsequent world tour for the album.

2. Merchandising and Online Music Streaming

One of the great visual spectacles of an AC/DC concert is the river of thousands of people wearing the glowing red devil horns. This is meant to replicate the gesture that often accompanies Angus Young as he plays songs such as 'Highway To Hell' and 'Hell Aint a Bad Place to Be'. These horns can be purchased both online and at concerts. Alongside the devil horns; CD's, clothes, banners, stickers...etc appear in the stalls outside of big concert arenas. In terms of AC/DC's brand, few bands seem to balance their brand in a commercial sense as well as they do. AC/DC break all the rules when it comes to branding and products; AC/DC even have their own wine and monopoly game. In order for the branding to work effectively, they need to somewhat leverage the band. An example would be to market trade gear alongside the use of heavy machinery; commonly used by people who work trades. Bands that release new products/merchandise that stray too far from the original idea risk losing money in the short term and also risk permanently tarnishing/damaging the brands image. The risk of losing the idea of the brand can be lost through confusing releases that can send the wrong message about the original brand. It can be said that die hard fans of any band will buy anything that bands put their name too but AC/DC fans make it easy for these sorts of items to be sold. With wine being the example used before, the band has history in terms of releasing things that have nothing to do with the band itself. As said before, it doesn't matter if these are appropriately priced, there are always fans who want the things that are being sold. AC/DC own their own website that you can buy several pieces of the bands merch; with band information, ticket information etc all being displayed here via the tabs you can click on. This website is also fairly easy to navigate so it makes it easier the access these items as they are only a few clicks away. You can also stream music on the website and up until recently, it was one of the only ways of listening to their music for free legally. Obvious online platforms such as YouTube contain live footage and song uploads but it wasn't until 2015 (billboard.com) that AC/DC jumped on the 'streaming bandwagon'. There wasn't much feedback from AC/DC regarding this decision as the band stay fairly tight lipped on the inner workings of the group. This may have been another attempt at connecting with younger audiences as the majority of young people listen to various streaming. According to the Business Insider, more the half of the music listened to was actually via some sort of streaming service, both visually and audibly.

Below is table outlining sales from both digital and physical music consumption from 2016 to 2017 in the U.S; (Business Insider, 2017)

This chart shows that music streaming dominated the way music was consumed. 2017 saw the decline in sales from other platforms but even so, this doesn't compare to the amount of money that steaming services make.

This can be compared to MTV in the 1980s when AC/DC sales started to slump and their audience started to listen to other bands such as KISS, Poison and Motley Crue. There are definitely ways the internet helps build more support and keep older bands somewhat relevant again but being able to connect with the modern audience definitely is a positive in that situation. In summary, the several revenue streams set up by AC/DC can be somewhat targeted towards both old and young audiences and really goes onto prove that this band have adapted to the three generations it spans across.

AC/DC are a great example of how stepping in a different direction with the status quo can benefit

themselves and their fans. This band attracted new followers with the release of MTV, gaining access to new audiences that love the music as much as the fans that have been there from the beginning. This also helped them craft a new way to put out their music, falling more in line with how the pop genre was marketed and released in some ways. This allowed them to show off their live prowess on the small screen with the addition of a new single. More recently, adding their whole discography has also helped their music spread even further and as a result, people of all ages are attending the live shows that they put on. With AC/DC name being as popular as it is, it seems quite easy for the band to release something completely unrelated as they know that hardcore fans will probably buy it and this adds to one of the many revenue streams that the band has.

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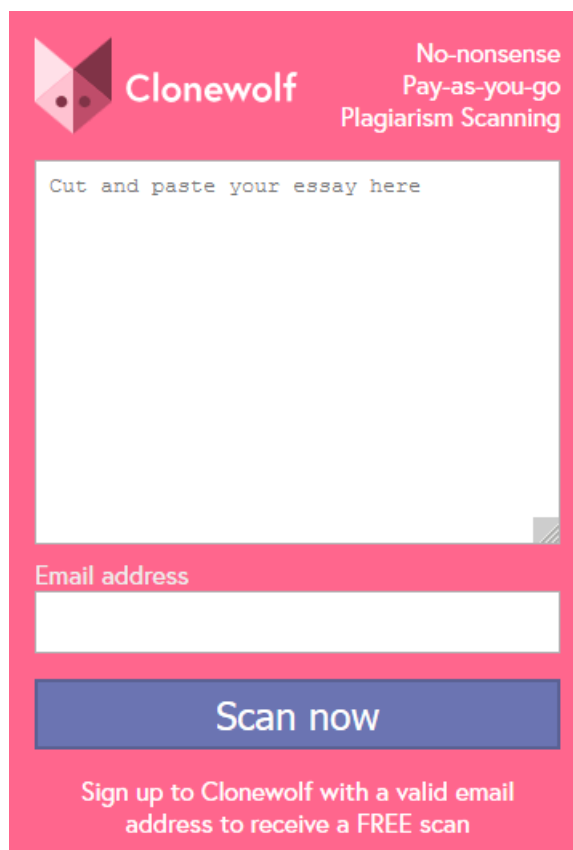
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