



Friday 27 April
Commercial Realities Today

Keynote Speech

***How To Survive 25 Years in
the Music Business***

By Korda Marshall

Colston Hall Bristol



Graeme Howell (introduction): The format of today to start with is the keynote session. This is a two-way conversation which is something that we did yesterday with Jeannette Lee and Don Letts. We are delighted that we've been able to get Korda here, Korda Marshall, in conversation with Ajax Scott. You'll see in your brochure (you probably know a lot about both of them) but originally Korda was an architect, he trained as an architect, but then went into music playing the drums, got into A&R, and obviously established Infectious Records in 1993, then Managing Director of Mushroom Records in 1996 and is currently Managing Director of Warner Brother Records and looks after such bands and acts as Madonna, The Streets, Red Hot Chilli Peppers, Garbage, New Order, Green Day, My Chemical Romance, Michael Buble, Ash, Muse and Niles Barkley. A whole diverse range of people.

Also Ajax is here with Music Week, as he's been able to help us with the cover mount, editorial and all that stuff and has been helping us over a number of years, and he is currently publisher for Music Week. So it's great to have them here, and without further ado, will you please welcome Korda Marshall and Ajax Scott.

[Applause]

Ajax: Morning. I'm Ajax, this is Korda by the way.

Korda: We were going to play it the other way around...

Ajax: See how long it took anyone to guess. Everyone here alright with the mics? Yep? Excellent. Well we've got just over an hour, loads of stuff to get into, the format is going to be... Korda and I will talk for a while and then we'll open up for questions at the end. I'll start talking for a little bit just to set the scene about Korda, how he got from A to B, what he's doing now, explain a little bit about his background in terms of working with one of the largest companies in the world, very small companies, his philosophy, but really try to drill down into partly how he survives for a long time in the music business, but also from the artists perspective – developing careers and how easy it is to work with artists, to develop artists and to develop creative success, but within a commercial context, which is (I guess) a day to day challenge really.

So to start off, you were going to be an architect. What went wrong?

Korda: I did architecture because Pink Floyd were architects, and it became evident when I was about 15/16 that it's like an A level in English or Maths; it's a good grounding degree that will get you into lots of different areas. I remember reading a statistic that about 85% of people who do the seven year architecture course don't make it, but they all end up in quite exciting other careers, other industries. So fundamentally it was just an arts degree, it was a way of getting into arts college where I could get a student grant and I knew if I was in an art college I could play in a band so there was an intellectual process to get a degree and a very strong awareness that art college was a lot of fun.

Ajax: And good justification for your parents, being in a band...

Korda: Yeah.

Ajax: You were then in a band for three or four years. Was that something that you wanted to do... you wanted to be an artist?

Korda: Yeah, yeah. I remember when I was about nine or ten in the school playground, there were the charts (this must have been '69/'70) and I made a conscious decision that I wanted to be involved in music, or have some kind of situation with music. I was lucky enough to see David Bowie at Earls Court in '72 with my sister, whose boyfriend managed to get tickets. I was 12 and from that moment on I grew an awareness and a love and a care. I was always intrigued by this thing called 'Mainman' which was at the back of all the Bowie ads and what have you, were the management (a guy called Tony DeFries). I grew up in West London, in Barnes until the age of 12/13 hanging out in Kensington High Street and in Barton AC and all that, and then I got transported to a tiny little village in Cornwall called Roach, right in the middle of the moors where my family used to come from.

Because I was effectively a West London 12-13 year old trouble maker, living in a very little village, I kind of dived into music. I bought the NME, and Sounds and Melody Maker religiously every week on my way to school. I earned money cleaning cars and buying three, four albums every week. So that was the stage of

realising that I wanted to get into music in some kind of career. I also knew that I was never going to be a particularly good enough musician to actually have a career as a musician, so I always used the musician route as a route to get into the kind of machine behind it. Also, at a pivotal age when I got to 16/17 my elder sister, one of her boyfriends was a guy called Willy Fife who was Deep Purple's tour manager at the time, which kind of opened up a whole world that I didn't really know existed. And when I found out how that side of things worked, and the business behind it, and when I kind of realised that artists were on 14/16% I kind of worked out where the other 86% went and how the processes were.

Ajax: So what stage did you become aware then that there such things as percentages?

Korda: 16-17. Just what record contracts were, how artists got paid, where the money went, what the processes were.

Ajax: So despite knowing all that, you decided you wanted to become an artist anyway, did that for a few years, went on tour with The Bunnymen...

Korda: Yeah, we toured with The Bunnymen, The Cure, U2, Peter Gabriel. At that point it was the early '80's and it was an electronic band, so you could get all the gear in the back of a car. There was three of us in the van, so we could make £50 gigs actually pay and make money out of it, because there were only three of us and a couple of boxes to plug in. Drumming was easy because it was just pushing buttons.

Ajax: Just to digress for a second, at that stage you're playing with The Cure, The Bunnymen, U2... all of whom, right early on were pretty much on the same level. Probably the Bunnymen were the coolest out of them, maybe The Cure? U2 certainly went on to be the biggest. Which out of them at that stage did you think were going to be the most successful?

Korda: Well, in truth, none of them. There was a band called Comsat Angels and a band called The Sound... at that time there were Simple Minds, U2, Echo and The Bunnymen, Comsat Angels and The Sounds, they were the big bands in the early '80's, nobody thought that U2 would go on to be the stadium act that they became.

Simple Minds were probably in the leading position. The Bunnymen were great and Matt taught me a lot (I did two tours with him) and it was just watching and experiencing the songs. I remember hearing I think it was The Ocean, one of their great singles, very early on as they were writing it on tour, down in Southern Ireland, watching and seeing how that progressed. I remember them going into the studios in Bath and hearing the record. I was about 21, that was the first time I'd seen the development process of a song.

Ajax: I want to come onto that in a minute and that whole thing of how you spot talent, how maybe you don't see it at first and it's a little down the line that the potential really opens up.

Before we do that (just to set the scene a little bit) so you start work at a major label, RCA records, you quit the band, start working in A&R, do that for a few years. That gets you your first exposure with a big corporation. You then leave...

Korda: I had 10 years there. What's described as a 10-year sentence at BMG RCA in the early '80's. In truth I left the band in the middle of a tour... long story, I won't go into it... Irish band, and I was English, and I walked out of that in the middle of a Peter Gabriel tour in Newcastle. I can remember I wrote something like 167 letters trying to get a job; to publishers, to agents, to managers, to record companies, to music magazines. I'd come back to London with my tail between my legs and knew I wanted to be in the business side of the business rather than just the music side, or straddle the two. I didn't quite know how to get in, so I wrote a huge degree of letters. I remember I had 11 and a half hours, four separate interviews from HR right up to the MD to get a job at RCA and I was number six in a department of five, as glorified coffee maker. It was £50 a week and a bus pass and a luncheon voucher, so that was how I got in to RCA, and through a lot of hard work and hustling and trying to meet people and finding out if there were jobs in a six to eight month process. One of my ex-managers found out from a guy who was running it at the time, Peter Robinson, was looking for talent scouts. So I came in as a glorified coffee maker, tea maker, tape copier/talent scout. Then through 10 years there the first act that I worked with was a band that I used to rehearse with when I was in a band, called the Blow

Monkeys, who at that point were number 43 on a list of 42 artists and were about to be dropped...

Ajax: There is a recurring theme here...

Korda: Yeah, always... so 10 years there, a wonderful nine years and then worked with a lot of different artists and learnt an awful lot, and then I got ignominiously, constructively dismissed when a new management regime came in. I'd had like a million and a half pounds invested in Take That, which we'd signed. I was the head of A&R, a guy called Nick Rayman was the actual A&R guy, we signed that and M People, and the new regime came in and looked at the balance sheet, and went 'you're the one responsible for losing all this money' so I got constructively dismissed. But during my contract I had a clause that said they had to pay me out, (I actually only exercised the option six months earlier) so I walked out with two and a half years salary when they fired me, and that provided me with the position where I could start my own company. In April 27th '93 I limited Infectious and started Infectious as a limited company, and built that up right to 2002/2003. At which point I back-ended it into Mushroom Records and ran Mushroom Records and grew that. In 10 years we ran it from a £5,000 start up to... last year it was a £23.5 million turn over.

Ajax: One of the unusual things, really unusual things about you and the UK music industry is that number 1, you're a musician, and number 2, you've worked in a large corporation (RCA was one of the majors, part of BMG at that stage). You then left, you set up a company with your own money (pretty much on a shoe string) done the independent thing (we'll talk a little bit about that and the difference). You then got involved with a larger independent, Mushroom, that then got owned by News Corp. So you've worked for another large corporation, and you're now back in Warner's, which is one of the big four. So you've seen the industry from all angles.

You've worked in the independent world, and now you're back in the major world, what are the biggest differences that you've found, in terms of what it allows you to do, and in terms of how you approach music?

Korda: The big difference is resources. It's a very different kind of business; you are running a very different kind of situation. I

honestly think that a lot of major label executives should spend a period of time within a smaller company. It's a lot more scary when you've got your house and your mortgage on the line to have a hit succeed than when it's a budget or a larger situation.

I think by definition independent companies are normally or generally one of two kinds; there is the business orientated independent music company which is run within a process of buying something, marking it up and selling it on, building a catalogue. Then there is the creative, or if you like musical artistic independent world which is generally full of entrepreneurs who are prepared to take risks earlier, who are closer to the music and who will find talent and develop talent and will be a very close part of that process. The independent world, what it is now is not what it was in the '80's and '90's, but it is a wonderful business where because it is your own domain and your own process you can be a lot more creative. Where there isn't money often that actually forces or focuses the mind... where there is a lack of finance to have a kind of over process of creativity in having ideas and taking things left and right, you find many different ways to market a record with £15 if £15 is all you've got. It is a very different skill set than marketing a record with £115 million, or a £150,000, so it is the necessity of invention and the process of making things work.

Obviously it's a lot freer, but you can't really compare, you know there are big cars and little cars, big companies and smaller companies and I'm not size-ist; you can have big companies that are run in the same kind of process (which is what we are trying to do) and you have smaller companies... the politics within the independent sector in some ways make the politics in the major sector... you know... it's not true to say that just because they are a big major record companies they are full of politics, there are a lot more politics in smaller companies. I've seen a lot of very credible independent companies treat their artists in ways that, quite frankly, (compared to how the bigger companies work) are quite shocking.

But, horses for courses, I went through my staunch 'indie or die' thing a long time ago and I've come out the other side. I was a founding member of AIM (the Association of Independent Music) and I've been on the BPI (which is the British Phonographic Institute for Music) for six or seven years. I think the independent

sector and the market is a fantastic, really exciting and dynamic place. Necessity makes music come out and artists make and write and create, and they need to find avenues and channels for that art to be distributed and put out. It's slightly more leaning towards that kind of side, where obviously bigger companies have an agenda and shareholders and investor return value and a whole other side to it as well.

Ajax: To look at it from a different perspective - if you were starting out now, you were looking to start out in the industry, let's say you've been in band, you'd probably be doing everything on Myspace, you'd be selling some downloads, all the rest of it, but you wanted to go into the business, where would you advise somebody...

Korda: I'd become an agent or a promoter. You can see various large international artists and their work is £7.99... I mean I bought the entire history of The Jam, a triple CD set for £2.99 in Woolies, and I've just bought Rolling Stone tickets for £280 a ticket so... there are lots of different aspects of how you can enter into the business and I think that the same way that you get an A level in English and Maths as a grounding, or degrees that are an arts grounding, you need to get into the industry and have a focal point of a specialist area that you want to work with. There are many, many different entry points, I think the one thing that you should be is fluid in the process, rather than say 'I wanna be an MD' or 'I wanna be an A&R man' or 'I wanna be...'. If you are full of 'I wanna be's' you won't be anybody. You have to roll with the punches and find the spaces and places for you to excel.

Ajax: I presume the other thing that is really different nowadays and continues to be different is that it used to be that you worked in a record company or work in retail or in the live sector, now actually, especially if you work in artists management who've always done a bit of everything, actually the barriers between the different parts of the business are dissolving. A lot of record labels are looking to get involved in live music, or a management company might be looking to work with merchandising or whatever it is and you have to have the mindset to move from one to the other.

Korda: Be an all rounder.

Ajax: Exactly.

Korda: It is a challenging time, there is more music within culture and within society and in the ether than there ever has been; I mean there is great music being made. Someone would argue not as great as in certain historical periods over the last 40 years, but I think there is great music being made. I think the process of how genres have fractionalised (you know you have certain movements, and now it's about five or six or seven different tribes). I think the roundedness is a reflection on society now and how society is; digital communication and information technology, a whole generation of kids who have never lived through a war (a proper war) or depression or a process of being intelligent, articulate, aware, educated and making their own choices and their own decisions. By definition that makes everything much, much rounder and a broader process. The older days of compartmentalising every sector of the business, or every section of the industry or genre, I think that related more to the '50's or '60's more than it does to the '80's or '90's, and now with the noughties, things are opening up.

I'd like to think that out of change comes opportunities, and like all industries they change and they grow. Technologies have a huge impact on industry and in the creative industries technology has had a massive impact in the growth. The changes that we are going through now are really healthy and positive. There are those that kind of go 'oh... it's the end of the world' and are fearful of that process, but there are those who welcome the change, don't always understand it, but are prepared to look at it, get involved and be ahead of the curve within the new world.

Ajax: Of course the one thing that reunites all of that (that you mentioned) is the music, which is where I want to move onto now. There is a slide over there which shows just some of the artists, the ones at the top are artists you've signed and the ones below are artists that you've worked with over the years. There are many more but I couldn't fit them all on there.

Let's just talk briefly about how artists reach you, and how in your company the A&R process works. Gone are the days when you are out every night (well you're not a scout anymore so you are not going to be out five gigs a night at the coal face) but I'm sure you're out loads. Would you advise people still to send in demos?

CD's? Is it all done on line? What kind of team do you have and how do you come up with the goods at the moment?

Korda: Well, the process of being 'found' or 'discovered'... remember there are lots of A&R process, the A&R process begins with a mum in a kitchen buying a guitar, and ends with somebody buying a record. The shifting process of discovering talent, or what have you, is many and in different shapes and at different stages. I'm a believer, a strong believer that talent will out; really talented people will be found, there is a sophisticated system of finding talent. There are no rules, people can be found in many different ways and people are going to be discovered in many different ways, or position themselves so that they will be discovered. Being a musician or an artist is a bit like being a painter or a potter or a draftsman... you know... everybody can do it... everybody can get a piece of paper, pick it up and draw a picture of a smiley face... everybody can sit down at a piano and play a chord. The processes of greatness, of creativity, of real talent, of aesthetic and a real kind of musical context about making emotional connection and communication that moves, about having some kind of cultural resonance. Some kind of thing from earnest left of centre, from Thom Yorke and Dylan (everything that tree and that world exhibits) right down to Bucks Fizz and the kind of pop side (Westlife and Take That) and everything in the middle. The creative bit is where I'm much more focussed, everything left of the centre.

If you've got that talent (song writing is a skill and an art, like being a silver smith or a craftsman, it's a real craft to be able to write songs) if you have that in abundance and you can develop that and you have a musicality about it and you are really good, within the UK right now (and probably for the last 30 years) there is a really strong, sophisticated scouting network. Whether that is local press, local radio, local agents or big regional centres (we've got 15 regional scouts running round the country all the time on cyberspace, at gigs what have you) if anything good pops up, then generally one or two people hear about it and that travels very quickly. If there is a band that's really good that pops out of Paisley I get to hear about it. I've got 25 years worth of connections and relationships and processes, so I get an awful lot of traffic that just comes into me, sometimes too much traffic, sometimes not enough (there's nothing worse than not having your phone ring, so you have to go out and look for it as well).

Finding talent and looking for talent in the independent sector is quite a different process than finding it in a bigger, more resourced company. Right now I've got an A&R department and quite a number of different people within that. Their job is like the research and development wing of any traditional manufacturing company; their job is research and develop to find new product lines and new processes and their job is there to find new talent, look after the talent that we have, to roll the rosta and make the records and get a consequential flow of releases to which we can put a business plan together and make it all work.

The ultimate process is about being convex rather than being concave, so that you bounce out and your arms are open. I still chuckle when I get a CD from a cab driver...

Ajax: Do you listen to them?

Korda: Yes I do listen to them.

Ajax: And have you signed anything from a cab driver?

Korda: I've never signed anything from a cab driver. I have signed things from Jiffy bags and I have known of artists that you know... You never know, the cab driver might have met a young George who becomes Mr Michael, you never know... it's like fishing – there are many different analogies and similes in terms of the process, but finding talent... finding it is one thing, finding it is like putting your clothes on and getting your boots on and standing at the starting line, that's just the beginning. The point where you've found, and you've got a relationship and you've signed, then the whole process of organic career development and the building blocks and the whole process starts from that point.

So there is a sophisticated network in England, there just is, and if you are really good and you really come through, you'll be found. You obviously have to make your own luck. The process (I can't reiterate enough) is about taking risks and being creative and believing in yourself and having confidence. There is a very fine line between having arrogance (I'm not really attracted to arrogance) and confidence (which I love and look for). The process of discovering the talent, I use very different building blocks that are around at various times depending on the

landscape or the cultural process or who I'm with and what have you. For instance at Mushroom Records I had a very strong philosophy for seven of those ten years, where I was looking for artists under twenty or who were over thirty. I signed Ash when they were 15, or Matthew and Muse with Dennis when they were 17/18 and Symposium when they were 16. I signed Garbage (who were certainly over 30) and Oakenfold (who was well over 30) and Zero 7 who were over 30, for various different reasons, but to do with youth, energy and exuberance, and then to do with experience and intelligent conversations. To get away from the stropy 27 year old ex-failed muso who'd got a chip on his shoulder who wants huge posters and £100,000 videos, full page ads and what have you. I made a very specific kind of strategic decision about finding talent. The underlying thing in everything that I've done (which I learned very early on but have reapplied in the last five/six years) is the process of what we are looking for.

The key, and this is probably generically true over the 25 years, is three things for me; firstly, the song. The song is the tools if you like, the song is the canvas and the landscape and what fits everything in, and like I said, tune smith and song writing and the song process is really important. So the songs. That doesn't necessarily mean verse and chorus. Stairway to Heaven is a song, Bach and Rachmaninov can be songs in various phases, so the composition of the song is the most important thing in my mind.

The second thing is performance element. If you are a singer, that means singing brilliantly, if you are a musician, it's not a million notes a second and all of them meaningless, but it is the process of the musicality and the performance and the talent within that. It's really important for me that people can play, that they are in time and in tune, they can understand it, they are confident, their range, their vocal abilities their lyrical dexterity, all the things that are like the crayons or the oils or the processes of how...

Third thing that really wraps it all up is attitude. Not generally on there [*pointing to the slide*] most of the things on there have some kind of resonance...

Ajax: I wonder where Peter André fits into all of that?

Korda: Yeah, well...

Ajax: ... the first or the second, but he does have attitude...

Korda: He certainly has that.

Ajax: And you signed him twice as well...

Korda: We did sign him twice. Yeah I did. He certainly does have attitude. And attitude (whether a whisper or a scream) having some kind of determination or focus or drive or motivation, notice me, or whatever.

In Peter André's case, there are many different elements to that attitude, from the baby oil backwards. We sold millions and millions of records with Peter and he was great. If it wasn't for the success that the records created (the financial success that those records created) that allowed me to pump money for a continuous number of years into Ash or into Muse, or into Oakie or Perfecto or into other artists. Commerce and art, or commerce versus art, or art meets commerce, or the dynamics of the two and where they work.

In the '70's when I was growing up and listening to pre-punk, to Yes and Genesis and Hawkwind, or Bowie or Alice Cooper and all that stuff, I always remember the Rubettes and the Base City Rollers and Gary Glitter. Were The Sweet a rock band or a pop band? Discuss. All those kind of things you think about when you are 14 years old, that whole world of using and developing and growing different genres.

I love pop music, I'm an old pop tart, I'm not too po-faced, I've seen from Five Star or Rick Astley... I was the one sent down to stand in the vocal booth when my boss signed Rick Astley to check that it was his voice that was coming out ('cause he was only this big and he opened his mouth and this thing came out of his voice and it was like WOW! Where did that thing come from!) and it had Waterman and everyone else playing around it. Showbiz and entertainment or art and aesthetics, that's just a broader role out of art versus commerce.

Everybody laughs, everybody jokes but he has had three successful pop careers; well, two successful musical sides to his career and the record with Jordan was a gold record at Christmas, it made hundreds and hundreds of thousands of pounds for

charity. I remember when we signed him the second time we did the deal and we negotiated it and within three weeks he'd earned three quarters of a million pounds from one photo session with Jordan for OK when they first came out of the jungle. He's in love and he's happy, and there's a view that says they deserve each other... It's really easy to throw stones and bottles and say 'big tits, oil and rubber'... but it's the way it is.

Ajax: You've mentioned oil twice and it's not even 11.30 yet...

Korda: You mentioned Peter Andre first! I had to courier his baby oil to him in South East Asia because he couldn't find anywhere to buy it. It was down to that level of relationship.

Ajax: Right, working closely with your artists.

We are going to talk about some of the artists that you've worked with as examples of how you work with artists. You've mentioned Muse a couple of times and obviously there is a local connection. When you first heard them, did you have any idea of what they would become in terms of global, stadium, huge band. Do you like them?

Korda: People sit and think that they did, but I don't think they did really. I defy a man who stand there and say 'oh I saw that band and I knew they were going to be huge'. I think people in music and creativity grow and develop and get attracted to. The smallest deals in the world have been some of the biggest, biggest most successful artists. Rick was signed on a £1500 singles deal on a 12 point royalty, and he'd sold, what, 17 million albums by the time he was 21? I've done multi multi million pound deals and sold 16 records, so the process of *knowing* that something's going to be like that or not...

Again I try to err on the left of the aesthetic side and try to err on the development... all those things that I mentioned earlier, vocals, musicianship and attitude. You look at Matthew, his voice, his musical ability, his determination (100% drive and focus). Having said all that, I passed on Muse three times before I signed them. The process of making the decision to... with Safta [*Jaffery*] and Dennis [*Smith*]... obviously there was a connection because I used to go to Sawmills [*Studio*] when Fairport Convention played at the local thing in Golant and I remember hearing rumours of Queen

recording there in the '70's or the Pistols being there. I knew Dennis and Dennis was aware of Matthew from a very very early age, at school and what have you. To a certain extent he had already been A&R'd; he'd already been found from a very early age and they put the band together and Dennis and Safta had the wonderful studio in Golant, so they developed that process.

I first came across them when Den gave me the CD's and that CD (I've still got it) had Muscle Museum, some amazing stuff, three or four songs. They put a record out with a limited edition and I remember seeing the gig at In The City, which I try to go to every year (it's full of A&R men and what have you). I remembered seeing the gig at the Hundred Club, which was the top four bands from the buzz at In the City. I saw them at another gig somewhere, can't remember where. It was four or five months later and I was in Australia with my chairman who co-owned Mushroom at the time. It was very late at night and I was obviously jet-lagged and therefore up at strange times and we'd been out partying and had a great time. We put the Muse CD on (there was an English lawyer who had taken the CD with him and my boss had the CD) we put it on at half three in the morning in a state of mind where it is slightly easier to connect with music (shall we say)...

Ajax: So that's the success of A&R, only listen to music at three in the morning?

Korda: Well... the success of A&R is whether the hairs on your arms stand up. You know when you listen to Beethoven's fifth you get a spine tingling... I follow that and the smell of it, or the non-objective criteria of A&R and the processes of the emotional communication and the smell and the feel and the look... it's a broader process. Obviously everyone has got opinions and I've signed loads of artists in the face of everybody going... when we signed Take That I remember getting faxes from everyone saying 'what are you doing, you're mad! You're insane!'

With Muse, they didn't have a lot of interest in truth. I think there was a Sony offer. I won't go into the aspects of the deal, but it was a pretty crazy deal, it was Australia and UK only on a five year licence, and it had matching options and things. The more we worked with them and the more we developed, the more success I

had with Peter Andre and things, the more money I could spend on it.

They grew up with the first record. John Leckie, who's a genius producer, made the record and he really brought something and helped. With young artists you try and put the right producer and engineer and manager and agent around, it looks like a three year degree course and you develop and grow. They learnt a lot from Leckie.

The band grew up; they went on tour in America supporting the Red Hot Chili Peppers and the Foo Fighters when they were totally unknown, just when the first album came out. When you see them live it is an amazing live show, because at a very formative stage they were blessed enough to tour American sheds seeing one of the greatest American rock bands of the last 15 years, and connect and see how it works. If it works in Delaware and Iowa, what's the difference between it working there and in LA, the process of the set and the pacing and what have you. To be fair they worked really hard.

The discovery process was really through Dennis and Sawmills. You often hear things three or four times... you know songs have a life and music, it depends on the environment you're in and the mood that you are in. If you are in a stropky mood in a horrible little place you are not going to communicate as well or get into it as well. If you are happy and you are sitting on a beach listening to something it's a different kind of experience. So there are times that you listen to songs and demos and they don't connect and there are other times that they connect really really strongly.

Ajax: So of course another band (you mentioned Sony being in the frame for Muse) another band who from memory, Sony were interested in and no-one else (much), hitherto no-one were interested in at all were the Darkness.

Korda: Again, I passed on them twice.

Ajax: So your most successful acts are the ones that you passed on first time?

Korda: Generally yeah. The Darkness is different. I should really explain. I went through two sides with them. There's all the things

that come in to me in an A&R sense (contacts and relationships and people sending me music) and then there's the A&R department within the company. I have a domestic A&R department as well, which is kind of relatively intrinsic and as you get older it's often said that you live through your kids. My wife was in A&R, she was a publisher which is how we met. She signed the Mission, she found All About Eve through a Jiffy tape in publishing. My 20 year old who is now in A&R and has grown up around it and is opinionated and been in lots of different situations and loves music, and my 14 year old and my 12 year old. With the Darkness, my daughter was 14/15, and she kept playing the four track CD at home, in the car, on a Sunday morning really loud, really really loud, and out of that we thought we should take another look at this.

To be fair, I also had an A&R guy a called Joel Death (Joel *Dee-ath* actually but this is rock and roll so he was Joel Death) and every week for about eight weeks he'd come around and I'd give him a cup of tea and an ashtray, and he'd say 'Here's a Darkness CD for the weekend, have a listen... this is the seventh one I've given you but have another listen, it's really good'. They are a Marmite band you know, you either love them or you hate them. Again within the cognoscenti, arrogant A&R community 'he wears leotards!' I grew up with sticks, I remember Cheap Trick, I remember Bowie wearing leotards, it was pretty cool in '72.

Lots of other things that I haven't really talked about is the landscape, or referred to as the cultural or the creative processes in the landscape of things, and the building blocks (under 20 or over 30 or the three underlying processes) and lots of things are important to me about landscapes. If there's something that isn't there [*gestures*], and there are lots of other things that are over here [*gestures*], then you can kind of, not guarantee but it's a pretty good bet that at some point what isn't here is going to come back over there. When Bros and New Kids on the Block finished and there were no pop bands, there were no pop bands in the charts for about two years and we made a concerted and coordinated decision that at some point there will be and we are going to find them. That's how Take That came through. With the Darkness it was 2002/2003, there are still no bands like them, but there weren't any bands like them at the time. When I saw them play in a little pub in Camden like they were playing in Wembley Arena I kind of laughed and thought it could be Wembley Arena

because they thought it was Wembley Arena! I love Spinal Tap, I grew up with Spinal Tap, I've watched Spinal Tap 152 times. Probably when I moved from West London, Afghan coat, looms, clogs and all that and then went to Cornwall in the '70's (which was very 'Cornwall' in the '70's like Ireland was in the '70's) I've got a strength of conviction that if 26 people say blue and I think red, I'll just stick to red. The more people who say 'oh you shouldn't be doing that' it's an interest to me. The more people who say 'fuck me, you like that! You're crazy!' you think it provokes that strong a reaction in you that really have a problem with it so much that there must be something in it. So as a general career thing, the reason I've been doing it for so many years now and I'm a success in it, is because I've made every single mistake in the book. I'm not afraid to turn back and say 'yeah I said that then and this is now and this is what I think now'. Realising that things change, situations change, artists write different songs, what you've passed on at what point isn't the same. The things that I've passed on many times an artist can have a whole series of songs and then come along and write one great song and on the third set of demos... you know.

Ajax: Just plucking a name out of the air, who have you passed on, who you didn't get at the time do you most kick yourself over.

Korda: Oh goodness, that's a complicated one. I'm not sure there is... I remember passing on Bronski Beat once and feeling really stupid about it. They came out, Small Town Boy was a massive hit in the '80's and that was a salient lesson. Artist wise, it is difficult in real sense of things that we've tried to sign or not signed. In a recent sense the Klaxons we loved and wanted really wanted to work we wanted to make that work and it didn't. Just go back over the last five years and pick out one band? I wish I'd signed Nirvana, I suppose that's the biggest regret but I never had the opportunity. Hole I tried to sign, I didn't pass on it. It's not always the things you pass on, sometimes you try to sign an act and you just don't get it. It's like fishing, you can look for different things but it is not always your reasons that determine whether it happens or not.

Ajax: I'm really mindful of time, but before I open it up (or we could keep going all morning) one area that I want to briefly open up is how you work with artists, especially with an artist who has a strong personality or strong vision which you don't necessarily

think is the right one. The Darkness is an example; you were involved in the first record but you weren't involved in the last record, but they were hugely successful and then they weren't. When you have someone who wants to go in one direction and you think it is going to be a mistake, how do you manage that process? Maybe there are some examples from people you've worked with over the years.

Korda: The working with talent process is built on a whole other thing and it helps that I've been an artist. In truth, I grew up in Cornwall, I grew up in a creative... (my dad was a silversmith and an artist and a potter) so I grew up in a creative environment. The subject of the psychology of art, you can go to college and study psychology and psychologists and there are many books on the psychology of art. The process of working with artists and how you ultimately guide, push, pull and focus. All of that is really ultimately based on relationships and relationships are built on things like confidence and shared experiences. You can't start at the top, you have to start at the bottom and build a confident relationship with somebody. They are full of 'ying' words, truth, honesty, compassion, passionate, support, help and if you have a relationship with an artist and you've got the ability to be honest (sometimes it's very hard being honest) and within what I do know, I often preface (specially with a band I don't know very well) with 'treat me with the utter contempt I deserve, but... this is what I think and whether you agree with it or not, we'll tell you what we think'. That honesty and transparency relates to the initial relationship or the conversations right down to the royalty statement and the process of having a proper, solid relationship, especially if you then go through cycles of albums and cycles of years.

I've worked with Shirley Manson and Garbage for many many years, I've worked with Ash for nearly 15 years, so those long-term relationships are important. The famous story with Prince and Sign o the Times, which was delivered as a triple album set, and how one of the greatest A&R men in the world in America (Mo Austin and Lenny Wanaka at Warner's in America) how they edited that down to a single album. Artists are artists, that's what they do, they create, they don't necessarily know that little bit there is actually the best bit if you take that out, and the filtering mechanism, giving them the tools to help them, the studio, the

producer, the 18 piece string choir, whatever it is; by supporting, by being there, by discussing.

It's great to be in Devon today, on Thursday and Friday I was in Orlando, Florida, and I was in LA for three days on business at meetings and things, and I came back via Orlando, Florida, so that I could go and spend a day and a half with Muse and My Chemical Romance. Muse are on tour in America and there was a lot of debate about whether we should do it. I felt very strongly that they should do it, they didn't want to do it, they did it (rightly) and they are in the middle carving out the mid west, in the way that you just have to carve out the mid west. They want to be successful, they are successful, they are massively successful here, they've got half a million records in America (they've got a gold record in America). The day I flew into Orlando they were in bloody Pensacola I got the town wrong, then they were in Orlando the next day and I could sit and spend a long time with them and discuss and have a relationship... the 18,000 big fat American Goths and seeing how that worked and what have you. Everybody goes into LA and New York or do Wembley (everybody will be at Wembley trying to talk to them) so touch points with artists and really understanding them and knowing that your phone's always on and feeling that they can talk to someone (if their accountant is saying this, and their agent is saying that and their manager is saying that) so they can communicate and talk.

Those relationships are like marriages or friends, you could be really good friends but then you're not such good friends and then you are really good friends... and the success of all of those processes. Success brings a different kind of friendship, different kinds of problems, different kinds of situations. The fact that a lot of my artists have renegotiated (Garbage have renegotiated two or three times, Ash have renegotiated, Muse have renegotiated) is because of the intrinsic relationships with them. You earn that and they earn that and cocky arrogant musicians who think they know it all haven't earned it is not something that I'm attracted to, and cocky arrogant record execs isn't something I'm attracted to either. For me, it's much more about nebulous things like aesthetics and the creative processes and the artistic, creative side of things rather than the square box of the business. The business is the business, two and two are four, it doesn't make six it makes four, and within that objective criteria that's what it is, it's not arguable. What makes an essay a B+ or an A, or a Monet better than...

whatever definition of art you want to get into... one book better than that book and all the subjective issues about that. The editing, filtering and guiding just to be a help, or staying the fuck out of the way. Just disappearing.

We've just put a band in Devon for 3 weeks just to disappear, write some songs (or don't write some songs, just go away) you've just finished 18 months on tour, just disappear. It's not always about what you do, it's about what you don't do.

Ajax: I'm mindful that we've been talking for a while now and we've touched on psychology of art to baby oil and everything in between, going through loads of different stuff. How about you, what do you want to pick up from any of this? Not least there are a load of artists up there that you might want to ask about, how it has been working with any of those, how their records have been made... I'm going to open it up to the floor. That hand was up first.

Audience member: I'm just starting a studio and small record company, I was wondering what advice you might have about trying to build turn over.

Korda: The thing that I remember vaguely with a smaller company is that you've got to remember that it is like the lottery. You are three and a half minutes away from having a successful company. It's as simple as that. If you get the right three and a half minutes, or seven minutes or six minute remix, then everything else will snowball from there. So the fundamentals are to get the music right. 98%. You can't cook unless you've got good ingredients. Getting the fundamentals, finding the right talent.

Once you've got that, investing carefully and cleverly so that you don't spend all the money in the first six months. That you can afford to build and grow, taking risks, having creative ideas instead of finances. Thirdly the process of access to the marketplace and distribution and press and promotions. I strongly believe in the entrepreneurial spirit; what creates companies, what creates success (what creates anything quite frankly) that entrepreneurial process is about setting certain parameters in what you work in and sticking to those with self conviction and self belief. But fundamentally, great pieces of music. If you get that, you've got to get all the other bits to make it work, and it's a Rubik Cube three

dimensional jigsaw puzzle, it is a minefield, but the conviction of carrying forward and carrying through.

The studio business is not what it used to be and it is very difficult to make any money out of the studio business, but a creative environment where an artist can create properly is invaluable. With any small company, look for help, look for advice, get the DTI involved, get the small business development agencies involved, network as much as you can, soak it all up, soak it all in, but also be very cautious. When you are going to twist, when you are going to do it, do it with real conviction, when you are going to spend, really spend, just be really careful with that process.

Ajax: To think back to when you were starting Infectious, there's running a business, and you obviously thrive on running a business and there is the creative side...

Korda: My parents owned a shop in Truro so I grew up in a shop environment so I saw the till you know...

[Break in recording to change tape]

...different kinds of reference points of what we wanted the label to be; things like not over 20 and not under 30 and the name, doodles for the logos on a blank piece of page. And the other one was the maths, square grid book which was the numbers; to plug in a business plan and work out how this much will cost. I signed Pop Will Eat Itself for £5,000, I'd signed them previously at RCA for £150,000 and when I left they went into the record company with baseball bats. My wife had signed them for £100 previous to that, which is one of the reasons we'd met, and when I left they were really unhappy with the people who were coming in, so they managed to creatively get themselves out of contract and we signed them for £5,000. That was in the business plan. I signed Ash for £12,000, ironically because it was the only money I had in the bank account at the time, it wasn't a nominal figure picked out of the air, that was all I had. They weren't clever enough to say 'if you give us all your money, how are you going to do all of this?' *[audience laughs]* I got a distribution deal and he gave me an advance out of the distribution deal I could make some more demos and out of the demos I could licence it in America, with American advance I could... you know you are skating on very thin ice and like all small businesses you need your creditors as long

as you can, your debtors as short as you need to have, all the money that you are owed paid to you quickly, all the money that you pay out you need to have as long as you can to pay it, and you need to run it like any business.

Audience member: My question is about technology. Historically it has been in the hands of the music industry, from Les Paul doing his multi tracking right the way through drum machine samplers. It seems to me that the cat's out of the bag, we all have technology now, so what is the opportunities and challenges for you there?

Korda: Oh they are massive. They are massive and they are tremendously exciting. It's kind of complicated because I can't say too much about them for various different reasons that he knows all about [*signalling Ajax*]. The future has never been better (from my side) and the creativity processes and getting a 72 track studio onto a laptop, the process of mass means of distribution without vans and lorries and everything else, the process of not having to record something and put it on one bit of plastic and then putting that bit of plastic into another bit of plastic and pressing some buttons and adding a few more bits of plastic and then here's your music back. The context of just dialling sixteen numbers and listen to it here, and here and listen to it in your car, in your office WiFied up... all of that technology. Technology has always driven businesses and any kind of industry, and this is a great exciting time because like all businesses a period of transition and change create opportunities what have you. For me, music is a sense; you eat, you sleep, you smell, you hear, and there is a musical connection. How that is interpreted, how it is made, how it is brought to the market, there are no rules, it is fantastic. The limitation from the sheet music and the piano in the parlour in Victorian times and all the progression through, from Edison and the cylinder to the cassette to the eight track... it's all about the technology. In the noughties and 2015 that's all going to get even more. We still need benefactors, we still need somebody to help to grow and guide and pay for this or build that, you still need support mechanisms around you, but the technology I think... I wish we'd embraced it earlier as a business, an industry. The alcohol industry started off illegally, the radio industry started off illegally and they all became legitimate businesses over the years. It's daunting for me, I can barely turn my computer on and get my email, I'm techno phobic, but that's my generation, I'm probably the last one. I sit and watch my kids do this and it's scary. I've got

122 songs on my phone, I can't get them out but my 14 year old can find me every single one in about three seconds. That technology and how it works and the process of growing is an exciting one.

Audience member: Connected to the last question, as someone who has worked in the independent music industry and the corporate one, what's your opinion on digital rights management?

Ajax: That is one of the areas that I would normally press on, but I can't because we've got a gentleman's agreement, basically he shouldn't be here because parent companies, it's a public company and they aren't allowed to say anything because of the stock exchange blah blah blah and it's great that he's here, but he can't talk about it.

[audience laughs]

That doesn't really answer the question.

Korda: Instead of that I was going to put a list of the things I'm not allowed to discuss on the screen! I think James is here from Corporate Communications, he's making sure I'm not saying anything I shouldn't be saying. It's a publicly quoted company and I'm a director and shareholder so I have to be very careful. There are stated policies from Warner's on DRM from Edgar who owns the company. There is a very specific policy on DRM that the company has and there's EMI's view and they said that, and like everything I've got my view. In truth, my view tends to agree with the companies view right now, it doesn't always, but at this point of time it does. It would be wrong of me start going on talking about it, other than in the bar later, at which point we could have a long conversation about it.

[Audience laughs]

Audience member: I'm currently in a band at the moment; we are playing a lot of gigs at the moment and wondering what the next step would be.

Korda: Sell them out really, and have a big huge queue outside of people who can't get in. Do that in one area and build that in the next area, and become the biggest band in your area, and grow

and build. A recent band we've worked on is called the Enemy from the midlands, and we build and grew and worked on that in a specific regional break out through great live performances. In terms of advice, it's a difficult one; the performance aspect is kind of one aspect of the process, and for me it is intrinsically important and it needs to be great. You learn that skill, if you rehearse 10 times, you get really good at rehearsals, and if you do 10 gigs you get a lot better at gigging, so I encourage you to play as much as possible. The apocryphal story about the Police playing in a club in the southern states of America to six people and a dog, the dog didn't like it but one of those people was a radio guy, and that's what broke Roxanne in America. I've seen many, many artists and bands where there have only been four people there, but obviously it is a lot better if there is 400 people there in a 300 capacity venue and it's hot and sweaty. That's how we would get to find out about it.

The performance aspect is one element and the creative aspect and the songs is another and you've got to look at both of those. When I was at Art College we were in a big band in Canterbury, which was at the time a big thing, but being a small fish in a big pond it is about getting into bigger ponds and growing as a bigger fish. I know it sounds like a really stupid analogy, but it's true. If you are big in one area, go into another area and try and make that big, and learn your skill and your craft as you're doing it. The opposite side of that is endless gigs with no reward, no return, tiring you out, wearing your voice out, ruining all your songs because you've played them too many times, so with all these things there is a balance of making it work.

Ajax: If you or your people are looking to sign a band, obviously you want them to be able to play live. What's more important, they've got a local following and that you are hearing them, or that they've got a million friends on Myspace and they are taking care of the business and they are buzzing stuff up like that?

Korda: Both I think. Both. The Myspace's and the digital A&R processes that are there are important. It's very easy to get (not a million friends on Myspace) but friends on Myspace and I've watched people pay money to get an awful lot of friends on Myspace so you have to be aware of that, and also I've gone and seen loads of gigs where I think 'wow, it's packed! What a big local scene there' and I've gone round the corner to get in the car

and there are four buses and they've just bussed them in from another area. I think they are both important, there isn't one thing that says that's more important than the other, it's about energy and friction and an awareness and people wanting to find out about it, whether that's through an online process or a live process or a T.V. process or, in the Beatles case, a summer fete. The early day 'being discovered' and organic things, there are many different ways of doing it, and I'd encourage the musicians and artists here to have that strong self belief and that strong self conviction and to put all those things into perspective as well. But to do all of them and learn from them, because you'll see what will work and what won't work and what's more suited.

Audience member asks a question which I can't hear

Korda: One of the bedrock rules, for a long time if I walked into a gig and there were 10 A&R men, I'd walk out, no matter how good they were because I knew I could never afford it. If I saw it and I loved it, I wouldn't be able to afford it anyway. I'd try to fish in places where nobody else is fishing and look for things that nobody else is looking for, that's where that gap that I was talking about, that hollow is. It's terribly difficult. I get threatened sometimes when I go in and see... and all of that is a process of... I can't believe I've been lucky enough to have all of that. The humbleness or humility, those aren't the really right words, but the honesty of just not being carried away with it. It's showbiz, it's entertainment, it is a lot better than working in a mine, and to treat things in that kind of way. I'm very aware of the (I don't really like talking about it) but the 'power' word, and profits and having success and making money. I've never been interested in money, I've never had it, or if I did have it I lost it again, it's a commodity. The process of what money buys is power, and to an extent power is a very crude emotion that is vulgar and people don't like to talk about, and there is an element of that. You walk in and therefore there's intimidation, especially when you are dealing with young bands. But then it is up to me or my team or the situation around to put them at ease and to crack a joke, or fall over, or discuss a relationship in a way that works for them or what have you. When I meet David Bowie I think 'fucking hell' so it works both ways and being aware of that.

Other record companies and anything else? No not really. We all have knives thrown in our backs, it's a dog eat dog world and it's a

hard world. This fluffy, nice, creative part that I'm talking about, there is also a really brutal, mother fucker *[punches hand with fist]* really hard element to that or competition and competitiveness and people trying to succeed and people with their opinions and that kind of stuff.

Peter Robinson (my first boss) taught me very early on, listen to every demo, return every phone call and always be nice. If you can't make a decision, toss a coin. It's as simple as that really. I don't always listen to every demo, and I try to return every call (even if I don't know them) I don't always do what he said but I try to. Some of the best decisions in the world I've made tossing a coin because I can never make a decision, and you've got a 50% chance of getting it right, which are pretty good odds.

[Audience laughs]

Audience member: What do you think are the most efficient ways of getting into the studio to record a single?

Korda: Getting into the studio to record them or get into the studio to work in the studio environment?

Audience member: To record them.

Korda: Well find somebody to pay for it is the obvious answer! There are loads of studios, find a relationship with a studio, find somebody with a production company who owns a studio, work in a studio, work somewhere else to get enough money to pay for the studio, build your own studio, *[audience laughs]* get a laptop with a studio on it... um... um... some of the greatest recordings ever made have been made on four tracks, so don't get 'studiofied'.

Ajax: What type of music are you doing?

Audience member: It's mainly classical.

Korda: Then the room and the environment and the purity and the electronics are really important. If you're in that area it's really important that you've got the silence *[claps to demonstrate]* and the sound and the sonic and the cleanliness... in a classical world it's difficult. To try and find people to finance that is tough, but to find somebody who has got a beautiful room with a wonderful

Shure microphone and one really simple connection to record straight onto hard drive so that it is as less mucked about signal as possible is probably the way to go. I don't know, advertising agencies, local radio stations, classical societies, communities, wealthy benefactors. I'm not necessarily sure how that works, but try all of them.

Audience member: Try to get funding together.

Korda: Yes, no one else is going to get it together. You only really get out what you put in, and if you go down every door and knock them down. I'd think carefully about the kind of classic field and what you are doing it for and how's it going to work. Is it for yourself? Is it to sell? Is it to represent you? Is it to say 'notice me'? Is it to exist with a press pack, with a biog and a PR situation, are you going to have someone who is trying to get some press about it? Are you going to send it to the 16 cognoscenti classical journalists in London? All that kind of stuff, so there is a reason. Or send it to a load of other artists and musicians that you can hear violins and strings on their records. That's a great way for a classical musician or string pieces. With Niles Barkley, when I had to find 12 young girls to play the strings, that was an interesting process, so that is a good entry point for classical musicians within the contemporary world, as an augmentor. That's not only for strings, that's pipes and flutes and bugle-horns and everything (when Muse needed a trumpet player for Knights of Sardonian). That's another way into the studio, into the process or developing a musical career.

Audience member: I want to ask you a question about radio. *[Can't hear full question, but relating to 'radio friendly' albums and songs]*. Do you find now within your company and the small independents that radio is still as important as it used to be, and are you still always looking for those songs that can get onto Radio 1, Radio 2.

Korda: Yes and no is the answer to that, in lots of different ways. Radio now is not as important as it used to be, full stop. When Terry Wogan (was it Terry Wogan?) the mood piece that they used to have at eleven o'clock every morning, an emotional moment. Steve Wright, or Simon Bates... that used to get 18 million, if we got Rick Astley played just before that (My tune? Or my moments? I can't remember what it was called) it was a big focal point of a

radio peak. And like everything now, society has fractionalised, people find their own entertainment and you don't get half the country sitting down and watching Coronation Street or listening to the radio. It has fractionalised, so the power that it has... Radio 1 numbers have gone down, Radio 2 numbers have gone down and gone up. In my day it was Radio Caroline and Peel basically, and the rest of it was Noel Edmonds (which was great in its own way).

Local radio, the BBC radio network, the local commercial stations, they are music to wash up to really. They all have play lists and they are very focussed play lists because they want music that people don't turn off, so it is not actually what they turn on to, but it's about playing a song that they don't turn off because then they'll lose the advertising dollars, so it's not in any way as powerful as it was. But then lots of media aren't. Top of the Pops became less powerful, in the early days getting on the front of NME would move your record up the charts 10 places, but that just doesn't happen now. People are discovering things rather than being force-fed or being told what to buy so the power of radio is significantly less. It is a very difficult process. Radio exposure does work still, having said that, the 11 million, 12 million at Radio 2, getting a record on a Radio 1 play list is important and it does work.

Getting back to those structures in the independent world that I had behind me, I always knew that I could never get my records on the radio because I couldn't afford the plugger basically, and I knew from my previous 10 years at RCA what that gain was. We'd always sign artists and develop artists safe in the knowledge that they could play live really well and build a live following and live career, safe in the knowledge that we'd get really good press and that we'd work the press significantly because the press were easier to get to than radio producers through various different ways. We always had a very good press campaign, a very good live campaign and a very good marketing campaign (not money, but 'notice me' and I won't go into how, but different ways of doing that) because we knew we'd never get on the radio process. For radio to play a record they need to know that they've got the support behind the record to actually deliver it and to actually make it a success.

Radio have been very open to the independent. Once we got to a critical mass within the independent as a company and we'd had a

proven track record of Girl from Mars with Ash, or Beautiful Girl with Peter Andre or Stupid Girl with Garbage, (a lot of girls in those days in the titles) then from those three records... (the two and half years prior to that I couldn't get records on the radio). Once that had happened and they were successful, I had a track record and a relationship. It is still one of the stupidest professions, one grown up man having a little CD going to another grown up man and saying 'please play my record, please play this record it's really good'... in some ways I look at the American model where you just pay a man 100 dollars and they play your record, it's quite easy. But I'm not allowed to say all that stuff.

The creative plugging, the promotion, the New York shopping trip, the coming to the gig, the environment, the relationship, all of those things of getting your record on the radio is quite a sophisticated process now because there is a lot of money in radio, it is a big business.

Audience member: To follow on from that, I write songs and I'm not that bothered about being noticed. How does that work?

Korda: Well you need a publisher, fundamentally. My side of it [*points to the bands on the slide*] most of that lot write their own songs. With Five Star I went through the tortuous 'find a song' process, Mr Andre I did it with various times and I've done it in the past. You are more on the commercial singer who needs his song kind of thing. Having said that, talking about what a weird profession promotions and radio promotions is, what a great profession being a song writer is. You write a couple of lyrics and you write a couple of notes, someone comes along and they do it and they sell zillions of records and you become a multi-millionaire and you don't have to do anything else! So it is a great profession. It's the bit in the middle, how you get to that stage. Feargal Sharkey, a good friend of mine who was a poet who blew up the Imperial War Museum in the '60's and ended up being in prison and ended up living in Ireland and wrote Good Heart (recorded by Feargal Sharkey), he's earned a lot of money for that song. His relationship with Dave Stuart, his legacy as a poet and an anti-war terrorist in the '60's kind of got him to that point, so it's a 'how do I win the lottery?' question. Write a great song. My Way (I won't go into the story of My Way) but how that came about and the lyric and the melody. The communicative process of the lyrics, when people are feeling blue and how that emotionally helps them, or

when they are happy and how a song resonates with them over a period of time, from a wedding or a first kiss, that all goes deep down inside. How do you do it? If I knew that I'd be doing it. It's a great job, you do nothing and you get loads of money. *[Laughter in the audience]*

Ajax: I'm getting the nod, so the bad news is that there is time for one more question. The good news is that Korda is going to be around for a little while and he is happy to be ambushed outside.

Korda: I'll be ambushed outside, I think I'm going to do the live thing as well, but I'm around.

Ajax: Excellent. So who's going to get the last one? I saw that hand there first.

Audience member: When artists get signed, is there a set number of albums that labels expect them to produce in a signed period. It used to be three...

Korda: In the old days it was nine.

Audience member: Nine?

Korda: Yeah it was nine in the '50's and '60's. It came down to seven. Jamiroquai was seven. When I started it was seven or eight. It kind of came down to five.

Audience member: Like one a year?

Korda: Well, in the Eurythmics case it was one album every single year. Again there are no real rules, for some artist it takes them five years to write one song and come up with an album, another artist can have an album every year for five years. There is no real rule. Contractual relationships with artists are changing, they are more transparent. The bad industry practices in the '50's... I couldn't do what I do for all this time if I'm ripping people off, I have to be honest and transparent and clear in the commercial relationship with everybody I work with; with everybody I work with, from the receptionists to my head of A&R to the tour manager to the manager. The dimension of that relationship whatever that is, there is a lot more flexibility now because it is a mature business. Whether they are joint ventures, whether they are production

deals, whether they are royalty deals, whether they are royalty deals within splits within joint ventures, whether they are one album with five options or five albums firm with one optional.

Audience member: So they are all individual.

Korda: In the independent world I didn't have a lot of advance money so I'd give a lot bigger share of the pie on the back end because I didn't have to pay lots of money.

Audience member: So you might sign one album...

Korda: Yeah lots of people do one albums.

Audience member: If it is a major...surely because of the investment...

Korda: I've got to be careful in terms of what I'm allowed to talk about contractually within the major company, but if I'm going to invest a lot of money in something, I'm not going to do it for a year or for one record. If I'm going to work with somebody and after all the things we've done and what we are doing and what we are prepared to commit, then we make that commitment and for that commitment I'd like to have a long term relationship to know that we can work together for a period of years.

Audience member: Do any artists get signed for three albums currently?

Korda: Artists get signed for one single one seven inch on a hand shake deal with no contract, right up to six albums multi-million dollar deals. There are all different shades.

Audience member: Can I just say to answer that, Billy Bragg signed on an album by album basis, was that exceptional?

Korda: No, it still happens. One of the important things that we haven't talked about which we can talk about briefly is copyright. For an artist who owned copyrights... What I do is build up copyrights, IPR (intellectual property rights) I start companies, I build companies, I work for companies that are IPR companies, we own intellectual property rights and they are songs. As an artist, you own those rights, the person who pays for the recording is

actually the person who actually owns the rights of that recording. Obviously if you wrote the song you own the song. The situation now (and rightfully so) is more skewed and more in favour of the artist more than it has ever been. If you've got some artists (like in Billy Bragg's case) owning their own songs was the most important thing. In other situations an advance is an important thing, or a royalty, or a situation or a relationship is an important thing. The one rule is that there are no rules. I'd talk to some lawyers, there is a book called How to Succeed in the Music Business that will explain, but you are in the artistic creative world, sometimes you are in the karaoke, showbiz world, and the contractual relationships that may exist... luckily artists don't get ripped off in the way that they did in the '60's. It's a mature business, we are very transparent, we have to work together, we have to be together and be honest (on both sides). I've seen artists behave in terrible, terrible ways and I've seen record companies behave in terrible, terrible ways. What suits one particular classical artist as opposed to suits one singer songwriter folk artists, as opposed to what suits a hard core nu metal rock act, are three different situations.

Ajax: Obviously as there is a negotiation there, one of the key things is to have some decent representation so it is a fair negotiation. So you are not necessarily doing the negotiation but someone who is completely on your side is doing it.

Korda: To an extent yes, but actually no, in truth. To an extent that's right, but these days everyone in this room is intelligent, articulate and educated and I don't wear the old 'I'm an artist, I don't want to know about things like that, I can't deal with that, 68 pages I can't read that'. You are letting yourself down in that context, and it's up to you and you are responsible for what you do in your life. You need to read agreements and understand what they mean. You need a lawyer that helps you to interpret the legal phrases and what it means. I'm old fashioned, I believe lawyers should take instructions and accountants should add up, but music should be run by music, creative people. It's not necessarily a philosophy that is much represented these days. I have a real problem when lawyers bamboozle the acts and say 'you don't want to know about that, trust in me, don't worry I'll get you the biggest money'. That still does go on. Like anything, if someone is willing to give you a lot of money on the first four pages, when you get to page 63 they might be finding a way to take it back, so that

transparency relationship with a lawyer and advice and guidance is intrinsically important. The business is sophisticated enough and everyone is intelligent enough (I'd like to think) that the days of Gilbert O'Sullivan signing and getting 4% of his work is something that relates to 1972. There are still sharp businessmen around and there are still little production companies who do 70/30 deals in their favour. The most important thing is don't sign anything (including any cheque) without really thinking about it, because that's the most important thing.

The advice in that one context, talk to everybody, you'll always get opinions and information, but the important thing is to make the decision that is right for you, whether it is one at a time, or seven, or production, or 50/50, whatever it is. It is all about what is comfortable for your environment and your stage of development at that point.

Ajax: Ok well we are getting on to the legal panel there. Time has flown. Thank you for paying so much attention, and thank you Korda.

[Applause]