

STANDING THE TEST OF TIME

You know **MOJO** as an iconic music title. **Caradoc Gayer** decided to find out more. Read here for an analysis of the magazine. Turn over to hear from **Danny Eccleston** : Senior Editor at MOJO.



Pearl Jam grace the cover of MOJO's May 2024 edition (Photo courtesy of writer).

MOJO Magazine has been a success story for 30 years in a very crowded market; where other music magazines have struggled to stay afloat in the volatile music business MOJO has kept its circulation of over 60,000 since the year 2000, according to ABC data.

MOJO's editorial strategy is an important part of its longevity. One part of this is the fact that the MOJO team never shy away from writing about music from the past, as shown by the legacy acts on the cover of their monthly print editions, like the March 2024 edition, which featured Paul

McCartney, or the February edition, which featured Stevie Wonder.

Their target readers are therefore clearly older (likely between 45 and 65 years old) by typical standards in the music media. MOJO writers know, however, that their readers are still selectively interested in newer music so they cover new artists who are either experimental, innovative or comparable to 'legacy' acts.

The artists in MOJO print editions are written about in many ways. Besides long-form features exploring the history of 'legacy' bands like The Beach Boys, readers will also find short reviews of new releases, retro-

spective features covering the anniversaries of classic albums, and reviews of books about music. The MOJO website is also packed full of content including long-form human interest features, new music reviews and rankings of artist discographies.

MOJO has a relatively small number of brand extensions. The 'MOJO Record Club' podcast is produced weekly, and the MOJO newsletter provides regular updates on the brand. A unique extension to MOJO is the 'Collector's Series': a second print edition containing in-depth, historically situated writing about a certain 'legacy' artist's career.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

MOJO Magazine has a very strong brand identity which appeals to a loyal, core readership of people between 45 and 65 years old. The print features advertised on MOJO covers focus on 20th century 'legacy' acts. This strategy appeals to the readership.

The journalists at MOJO write in an informal, slightly irreverent and very intelligent style, making connections between artists and bands across time. This tone-of-voice adds to MOJO's distinctiveness as a magazine and appeals to its readership.

The MOJO team produce certain types of content that are unique to their brand like their human-interest features which tell the story of a 20th century artist or band.

MOJO is published by Bauer Media: a very successful multimedia conglomerate that owns other famous titles. This allows for cross-promotion and the maximisation of revenue through Bauer's business strategies.

OPPORTUNITIES

MOJO could facilitate conversations between older and younger artists in an interview format, for print or online. This could attract more younger readers.

GQ reported in 2022 that 'older music' was seeing a resurgence in popularity due its widespread use in TV/film soundtracks. Moreover, The Guardian reported in 2023 that people over 50, in the UK, were going to more music festivals than ever before. These news events could provide various ideas for content at MOJO.

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MOJO'S PUBLISHERS

1993 to 2008: EMAP (now Ascential.plc)
2008 to present: Bauer Media

WEAKNESSES

Compared to many of its competitors, like Kerrang, Classic Rock and NME, MOJO has a smaller following on social media platforms like X and Instagram. Also, MOJO rarely holds events but instead relies on brand recognition and its established readership's loyalty to maintain its circulation. This could affect the magazine's outreach.

Unlike other music publications MOJO rarely tries to stay 'ahead of the curve' and on top-of what is 'newsworthy'.

THREATS

MOJO heavily relies on the iconicity of its print magazine but according to 'statista.com' print magazines in the UK are declining in popularity in favour of digital media platforms.

In a feature for the Press Gazette, representatives at NME magazine said that the written word can no longer be "front and centre" in music journalism. MOJO significantly relies on the written word to evoke its brand identity. It could therefore be 'left behind' by the growing pre-dominance of short form, social media-focused content.



DANNY ECCLESTON

From **making history at Q Magazine** to a close working partnership with an old friend, **MOJO's Senior Editor** discloses the tale of his storied career in the music media.

While attending Oxford University in 1986, Danny Eccleston dreamed of a career as a music writer. However, he never could have anticipated that he would lead two of the UK's most revered music titles: first as editor-in-chief of Q and after as senior editor of MOJO. Danny, now 56, says: "My friend, Jane Dowell, wrote for the student newspaper. I complained to her in a bar, one night, about the quality of their album reviews and she told me to write them instead. I did and got totally immersed thinking 'this is what I want to do'."

After graduating, Danny learned to be a journalist on the job. He was a subeditor first, then an assistant editor: working for assorted, small publications. He later moved to London and found that a friend from Oxford, John Mulvey, had become the features editor at NME. After taking various feature writing commissions from John, Danny became chief subeditor at Q Magazine in 1996.

Q, at that time, was one of the UK's most recognisable music titles. The 1996 'Q Awards,' for example, had seen musician Noel Gallagher introduced to future prime minister Tony Blair: an event that cemented Q's long-lasting cultural footprint. It was a hefty responsibility for Danny to become editor-in-chief years later.

"The 'vintage' artists, like Sting, Kate Bush and Bruce Springsteen were some of the biggest selling of the time but they weren't given much coverage in the weekly press because they weren't seen as 'cool'," Danny says. "We gave them that coverage and the gamble paid off because Q became an enormous-selling magazine. I remember working on the best-selling issue which sold something like 320,000 copies."

Danny left Q in 2002 and later started working at MOJO. The transition has since proven itself to be a natural one not least because, today,



Danny again works alongside John Mulvey: MOJO's current Editor-in-Chief.

"I commission everything in the magazine, from the main interview to the cover feature whereas John works mainly on the business and profit side," Danny says. "I always think about the readership, what they'll enjoy and what might challenge them, so John and I have lots of conversations about that. We do have very congruent ideas about what should go in the magazine and really, that's all that you can ask for in a relationship between editors."

For decades, MOJO has been one of the UK's most well-loved music brands, known for its celebration of rock and pop music history. The team write frequently about older music and often present the ways in which it has influenced the songs of today. This strategy continues to distinguish MOJO in a mercilessly competitive market

"At MOJO we say that old music is still relevant today," says Danny, adding "and I think that's why contemporary artists like being in our magazine, because we're not just celebrating what's new and novel, we're celebrating the music and artists that will stand the test of time."

Caradoc Gayer