Off the charts: Freeman alum finds success in music industry

November 4, 2024



Chika Ifediora (BSM ’20, MMG ’21) helps turn musical performers into pop stars as digital marketing director at Columbia Records.

Chika Ifediora (BSM ’20, MMG ’21) isn’t intimidated by celebrity. She can’t be, given her job as digital marketing director at Columbia Records.

Ifediora, who describes herself as “very online,” works with Columbia artists, managers and social media partners to develop campaigns that reach and grow artists’ fanbases. In that role, she has collaborated with some of the biggest names in music, including the Kid LAROI, Lil Nas X, Hozier and Beyoncé.

“The starstruck element is always going to be there,” she says. “But at the end of the day, it’s talking to people and having a very human-to-human interaction with them.”

To get to know each artist, Ifediora dives deep into fan culture, scouring message boards, Instagram comments, DMs and Discord servers to get at the heart of an artist’s online world.

“Part of the job is getting to understand how the fans speak and what they like,” Ifediora says, “I get to play around with different pockets of the Internet.”

This insider knowledge of an artist’s fandom — including its jokes and conversations — becomes part of a larger marketing strategy, enabling Ifediora to match artists with like-minded influencers and create tailored marketing materials that capture an artist’s image and brand.

These strategies have been successful, both for the artists she works with and for Ifediora herself. She was recently honored at the 2024 Billboard Women in Music Event and was named a 2024 Billboard Hip Hop / R&B Power Player. Her marketing efforts also helped raise Hozier’s song “Too Sweet” to number one on the Billboard Hot 100.

Though she has found success at Columbia, Ifediora never thought she would find herself working in the music industry.

“I’m not one of those people who knew from a young age that they wanted to work in music” she says. “I’m Nigerian. My parents are very traditional.”



Chika Ifediora, fourth from right, and the rest of Columbia's marketing team celebrate the success of Irish singer-songwriter Hozier, center, who has sold more than 7 million albums for the label.

Ifediora initially considered a career in law, but her experiences at Freeman shifted her course. As an undergraduate, she joined the Sony Music College Program and was tasked with marketing Sony artists to 18–24-year-olds. Through the program, she threw music events, engaged influencers and covered local shows with the goal of activating younger demographics. Her work ultimately landed her a job referral at Columbia.

Ifediora believes Freeman students can replicate her success and gain industry experience if they are willing to break out on their own. She suggests harnessing the power of the internet to start a music show or run a fan account. This entrepreneurial spirit appeals to labels looking to build their teams.

“It’s hard for a label to see that drive and that hunger and not want to bring you in-house,” she says.

A Freeman master’s degree doesn’t hurt, either. After graduating with a BSM in marketing, Ifediora went on to the Freeman School’s Master of Management program, an experience she credits with helping her move into current role.

As she has risen through the ranks at Columbia, Ifediora says she’s realized the importance of leveraging her insights to shape the company’s marketing practices.

“There are so many different perspectives that we need to bring to the table,” she notes. “We have a lot of artists of color. I advocate for them. We have a lot of female artists, and I advocate for them as well.”

Through her work, Ifediora reaches millions of people a day, exposing them to new music and points of view. That sense of possibility is what most appeals to her about her job.

“In digital marketing, you have no limit” she says. “It’s truly the most rewarding job that I could have ever imagined myself being in.”