THE ULTIMATE

YouTube GUIDE

FOR MUSICIANS

TURN YOUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL INTO A PROMOTION ENGINE THAT MAKES YOU MONEY

cdbaby

THE ULTIMATE YOUTUBE PROMOTION GUIDE FOR MUSICIANS:

How to Turn Your YouTube Channel Into an Engine That Makes You Money

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YouTube: home to cute cats, inane memes, and the most revolutionary music-discovery platform in history!

YouTube is quickly becoming the world's most popular search engine for music. Think about it: whenever your friend recommends a new band, whenever you have a craving to hear a rare oldie, whenever you want to see if a musician can put on a good live show, where do you turn? YouTube.

At least that's where millions of people are turning every day.

For today's independent musician, having a strong video presence is practically a requirement for a successful DIY music career. YouTube videos are easily accessible and easily shareable across blogs, websites, and social networks. But it's not always clear how a YouTube view translates into albums sales or concert attendance. This guide addresses some of those mysteries.

YouTube is one of the most effective music promotion machines ever, and we want you to use it to its fullest. CD Baby has put together this guide to help you with the nuts and bolts, from coming up with a great video concept to collecting the check for your music's usage on YouTube!

The Beginner's Glossary of Basic YouTube Terminology

(If you're an old pro, feel free to skip ahead. If you're a newbie or neophyte, read on!)

Share — Click the "share" button beneath the video if you want to share it with friends on your social media profiles, view the direct URL link, or embed the HTML code on your blog, website, or email newsletter.

Tagging — This is the process of listing words that relate to the video content you've posted. Usually, those words are the names of people appearing in the video, related artists, keywords corresponding to the topic, locations, etc. Once you've tagged the video, YouTube viewers who search for matching words and similar phrases will have an easier time finding YOUR videos!

Video Statistics — Click the "show video statistics" button (to the right of the total views count) and check out how your video is trending, where it is most popular, and the demographics of your viewers.

Viral — Unlike a disease, you WANT your videos to spread across the internet through social media, blogs, and email until they're as popular as "Chocolate Rain" or "Keyboard Cat." Videos that catch on in this way are said to have "gone viral."

YouTube Account — Anyone can watch videos on YouTube, but in order to upload your own videos you're going to need an account. Click HERE to sign up for a YouTube account. Also, since Google owns YouTube, if you're signed into a Gmail account, you can log into YouTube without going through all that username and password ballyhoo.

YouTube Annotations — Video Annotations allow you to add interactive content to your videos. Thought bubbles, notes, links! Oh my! Use annotations to add extra info about the video, create a choose-your-own-adventure series of videos all linked together, and much more. You determine what the annotations say and where, when, and how they appear (and disappear) while the video plays.

YouTube Channel — A YouTube channel allows you to customize the presentation of selected videos and engage your fans through social interaction features. You can name the channel (after your band or artist name), select a theme, choose a color palette, and upload a background image to create a unique experience. Your fans can subscribe to your channel and you can also communicate with them through posts. Basically, your channel gives you the opportunity to brand your band the way you want, control the content, and share it with the world from one simple location.

YouTube Partner Program — YouTube's partners program provides content creators with the opportunity to build a larger audience (through some extra promo tools), enhance their skills with additional production features, and earn more money.

YouTube Playlist — A YouTube playlist is a collection of videos (any videos on YouTube — not just your own) that is titled according to a chosen theme ("my favorite music videos with dentists," "best concert mishaps," etc.) and given its own URL. You can arrange the videos in a particular sequence and the viewer has the option to "play all" the videos in order without pause. It's like the video equivalent of a mixtape! Remember those?

YouTube Post — Posts (or "bulletins") allow you to contact your channel subscribers and link them to a new video, share a message, or request feedback. But make sure you're sending out posts with worthwhile stuff, otherwise you might lose a few subscribers.

How to Create a YouTube Channel That Engages Your Audience

Your YouTube channel is a reflection of you — it's your band's home-base for broadcasting videos on YouTube. From your channel, you can feature your own uploaded content, highlight favorite videos by other folks, and create personalized playlists.

A YouTube channel allows you to customize the presentation of selected videos and engage your fans through social interaction features. Basically, your channel gives you the opportunity to brand your band the way you want, control the content, and share it with the world from one simple location.

Here are a few pointers to help you get the most of your YouTube channel's customization options:

1. **Give your YouTube channel a good name.** This is the name that appears at the top of the channel. Choose something that makes sense (like your band or artist name!) — and don't be too clever unless EVERYBODY gets the reference.

2. **Choose a great background image** to customize your YouTube channel. When you are logged into your YouTube account, you can style your YouTube channel page by clicking "My Channel." From the main channel page, click the "Settings" button. From there you can upload a background image.

3. **Select a background color.** Set your background color to something that blends well with your photo. The color customization options are on the same page as the background picture uploader.

4. **Set the default tab display (in the "Settings" section).** This will determine what people view when they first visit your YouTube channel. Choose between a "feed" setup that displays recent YouTube activity, a video page that shows your uploaded videos in reverse chronological order, or a featured tab which you can select in "Settings" to display specific playlists.

5. **Fill out descriptions and tags for the channel.** The "Info and Settings" tab inside the "Settings" section allows you to tag and describe your YouTube channel. Use good keywords related to your music (including musician names, band location, genre descriptions, etc.) that will help viewers locate your channel in a YouTube search.

6. **Use posts to update your channel subscribers of new content.** YouTube channel posts allow you to communicate directly with your subscribers. Alert them of new videos and playlists, but don't get carried away — no one likes SPAM.

Tips for choosing and uploading your background:

- Choose a picture that is more panoramic than close-up. Think: wide angle shots of your band on stage, or something scenic.
- The center of your picture will be somewhat obscured by videos and text, so if the focus of the pic is on the left or right — all the better.
- Use a picture taken in landscape rather than portrait. This will work best for modern wide-screen monitors.
- Use a photo that is wider than 970 px in width. This way your picture will extend beyond the edges of the main content area on YouTube (which is 970 px). Otherwise your picture will be tiled horizontally, vertically, or both (your choice).
- In most cases, it doesn't look that great to tile your image. It's probably better to avoid tiling by choosing a larger image.

10 Kinds of Videos to Promote Your Music

These days, you don't have to have a giant budget to make a great video. Affordable video and editing technology now allows DIY artists to get creative when it comes to making content for YouTube. Here are ten different approaches you can explore:

1. **The standard story-oriented music video** — Ya know, like Michael Jackson's "Thriller" — something scripted with actors, props, costumes, and sets.
2. **Live concert footage** — Just like it sounds: a video of you playing a single song live. You can even shoot it on your iPhone!

3. **"Takeaway" show** — Think of it like field recording. Your band goes to a strange location and performs un-amplified for the camera, for the passersby, for whomever. Usually done with one or two cameras and minimal gear.
4. **Interviews and mini-documentaries** — Give your fans the stories behind the music! Have someone conduct an interview with you (or interview yourself). Try to document the story of your band in 5 minutes or less.
5. **Video press kit** — A quick movie about your latest release or tour that you can use for PR purposes.
6. **Behind the scenes** — Behind-the-scenes snippets of your band writing, recording, putting up posters, fixing your gear, eating at your favorite taco cart, or practicing.
7. **Encourage fans to record covers of your songs** — Why not? It worked for Steve Winwood!
8. **Animation Tools** — YouTube has a number of easy animation tools you can use for free.
9. **Stock/archival footage** — If you have video editing abilities, this is a great option when you want to create a video quickly and cheaply. Just make sure the footage is in the Public Domain first!
10. **Video songs** — The viewer hears the finished song, but all of the visuals are of individual tracks being recorded, all edited together at a fast pace to keep things interesting.

Promote Your Music with YouTube Playlists

A YouTube playlist is a group of videos that play in succession. You can add any YouTube video to a playlist, not just your own videos. This comes in handy when multiple people

have uploaded content that relates to your band (concert footage, interviews, mini-documentaries, etc.) and you want to herd it all together for fans.

When the viewer plays a video from within a playlist, the rest of the videos are displayed in a queue below the video player. Playlists are easy to create and edit in the Video Manager section of your YouTube account. Here are a few things to keep in mind when creating playlists:

1. **Be strategic and create themed playlists.** Remember that YouTube is the #2 search engine in the world. By taking advantage of similar videos on a particular subject, you can create playlists that will harness the power of related keywords, and potentially gain some cross-promotion with other bands. Let them know their videos have been included in your playlist and ask them to share it on their social networks.

   For instance, do you have a video where you offer touring advice? Pair it with some other informational videos on touring by other bands or industry professionals. Do you have an amazing time-lapse music video? Create a playlist of "The Top 10 Time-Lapse Music Videos."

2. **Use your playlists to organize your own videos.** Just because you're a musician doesn't mean everything you upload is a straightforward music video. You can use playlists to organize your content into specific themes — tour videos, behind-the-scenes recording videos, documentary clips, concert footage, music videos, etc.

3. **Embed your playlists on your blog or website.** Don't make your fans who visit your website keep clicking on video after video. Instead, embed a playlist, and suddenly it's like they're watching a TV station dedicated to your music.

Enhance Your Videos with YouTube Annotations

One of the easiest ways to make your videos more engaging on YouTube is to use annotations. Video annotations allow you to add comments, notes, and also link viewers to other YouTube videos, channels, and playlists. You control what the annotations say, where they appear on the video, and when they appear and disappear (though viewers CAN opt to watch the video without annotations).

You can choose between a speech bubble, note, title, spotlight, or label format for each annotation, and add as many as you like per video. Simply upload your edited video, click the "Video Manager" button, select "annotations" next to the "edit" button, and then click "edit." You can easily add and customize annotations from there.

When used sparingly, annotations are a great way to encourage your fans to take additional action. Here are a few potential uses for YouTube annotations:

1. **Let your fans know where they can buy your music:** "Get my album on CD Baby.com." Annotations won't link to sites outside of YouTube, so viewers will have to note the URL and type it into their browser. But hey, it's better than a mystery!

2. **Link to related videos:** "Click to check out my brand new video."

3. **Add a message** that says, "Find out about new concert dates." Then link to a short video that lists your tour dates.

4. **Add lyrics to your song**, or translate lyrics into another language.

5. **Offer a discount code** at the end of the video.

6. **Ask viewers to "like" your video** and "subscribe" to your channel.

7. **Add commentary** on your own music video.

8. **Add thought bubbles** to characters in your video.

9. **Create interactive videos** (like choose-your-own-adventures) by giving viewers options to link to/bewteen various other related videos that build a story with multiple outcomes.

The band Strangeletter edited a 51-minute video that paired their entire album's music with different still images for each song. When they posted it on YouTube, they added static Annotations with track numbers and song titles that would skip to that particular part of the video. If this sounds at all confusing, check out the linked video and it will make perfect sense.

If the thought of uploading a different video for each of your songs sounds like a pain, this method is an easy alternative. You can make it fancy (with different stills or video chapters for each song) or you could keep it simple (and just have one still photo for the whole album.)

HELPFUL HINT: the spotlight function allows you to highlight something within the existing video content as a link, so you can include more attractive text, images, and links in the video editing process itself — then upload it to YouTube and highlight those elements using the annotations tool.

The cool thing about annotations is that you can add, change or remove them at any time. This way you can add time-sensitive announcements like concert daters, contests and limited time offers right in the video.

5 Tips to YouTube Promotion

Here are a few extra things to keep in mind to help you make the most of your video presence.

1. **Add links at the top of the description field for each video.** Let your fans know where they can purchase your music; simply enter the URL to your blog or website (or to your cdbaby.com artist page) at the very beginning of the video description field (to ensure that it's visible to all viewers). YouTube will hyperlink it automatically.

2. **Make the first 15 seconds count.** As the saying goes, "Don't bore us. Get to the chorus." You've got to hook them upfront. YouTube videos are like pop songs; they're best enjoyed and shared when *short and catchy*. YouTube is proving there's some truth to Andy Warhol's saying, "in the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." Only now, *15 seconds may be all you get*.

   To help you capture your audience's attention, the Official YouTube Blog has offered some good advice on how to make the first 15 seconds of your video irresistible:

   Make compelling content first...

   - Start off with something that will immediately grab attention, whether it's what you say or a stunning visual.

     Make it clear what your video is about early on, so viewers aren't confused about what they're watching.

   - Tease the rest of the video so the audience is intrigued to see where you take them.

   ...share your channel branding later.

   - A flashy intro may look cool, but it's not the star of the video — let them see you, or your great content, first.

   - Make your branding compelling by making it entertaining or unique to each video

3. **Add tags to your channel and videos.** Tags are important. Tags are keywords that help people find your video in YouTube's search engine. What will your fans type into YouTube to find your video? Tag your videos with venue names, your band name (correct spelling and misspellings), song names, city, state, genre and other relevant keywords. Then when someone types in a search for your song or band, you have a much better chance of coming up first.

4 **Choose great titles for your videos.** Not many people on YouTube are going to be searching for "sadsong-ver.2 w/o vocals recorded at John's." Include your band name, song name, the venue or location (if relevant) and maybe even a few specific keywords that accurately describe your music.

For instance: Tommy Jug Band plays Silly Girl at Sunnyside Tavern, Portland, OR – Country Funk and Bluegrass

5 **Respond to every comment.** Responding to comments will not only make your fans feel appreciated, it will also inspire others to comment on your videos. Try sparking conversation by asking a question, or by pointing out something interesting in the video.

Stream Your Songs — Every Single One!

Since YouTube is one of the first places people turn to hear music nowadays, you want to make sure all your music can be found there. But you don't have the time or budget to make videos for every song; instead, create a stock slideshow of band photos and album art; use a program like iMovie to pair that same slideshow to every song you've recorded — then post them on YouTube.

Earn Money from Your Music Videos

YouTube has turned into an essential vehicle for driving independent artist revenue. In addition to sales you generate through your video promotion, there are now two more ways you can earn money directly from your music on YouTube: CD Baby's sync licensing program and YouTube's Partner Program, both of which pay artists ad-share revenue.

YouTube's Partner Program — allows you to monetize the videos uploaded to your YouTube channel.

CD Baby's Sync Licensing Program — pays you ad-share revenue for ANY video on YouTube that uses your music (not just the videos you've uploaded yourself). Plus, your music will be included in a catalog of pre-cleared songs available to music supervisors for sync placement in film, commercials, TV, video games, and more.

With CD Baby's Sync Licensing Program, you'll get paid for the usage of your music on YouTube — and not just in your own videos; over 60 hours of new video is uploaded to YouTube every minute. That's a lot of people who need good tunes to match up with the cuddly cat videos and wedding slideshows they're posting. Our partnership with music licensing firm Rumblefish will make your music available for these new income-generating opportunities on YouTube.

CD Baby's partnership with music licensing firm Rumblefish makes it possible for all CD Baby artists to make money from YouTube at no additional cost. Learn more.

Earn More Money from YouTube; Host a Video Contest

Since CD Baby's Sync Licensing Program pays you money whenever your music is used on YouTube, one of the obvious ways to boost your YouTube income is to get people to make more videos using your music!

Consider hosting a series of contests where fans upload videos with your music as the soundtrack, including:

1. **Fan-made music video contest** — Enlist your fans to make a music video or slideshow FOR you. Let them pick their favorite song, give them creative license to interpret the song their way, tell them to post it to YouTube, and then choose your favorites. Give out prizes — like free CDs, free house-shows, custom-written songs, etc. Create a YouTube playlist for all these entries.

2. **Personal/family videos contest** — Encourage your fans to use your music as the soundtrack to their family videos and slideshows, their weird pet tricks caught on tape, or whatever else they want to post to YouTube. You can award similar prizes for your favorites, or feature them on your website and social media profiles.

3. **Upload your songs to YouTube** — I know we mentioned this once already, but now that you can earn money from your music on YouTube, it's worth mentioning twice. Now is the time to create a simple video for ALL your songs; and by simple, we mean VERY simply — just a static still photo or slideshow of stills. Basically, this is for the benefit of everyone who uses YouTube as their listening platform. If someone's going to be streaming your music, better it be from YOUR YouTube channel that you control.

Whether you're going to spend thousands of dollars making professional videos or just plan on editing some iPhone footage of your last concert, YouTube is one of the most effective ways to promote your music. We hope the tips in this guide help you make the most of your video presence. For more information and tips, visit CD Baby's DIY Musician Blog.

CD Baby, the world's largest digital distributor of independent music, is a company run BY musicians FOR musicians. We've paid out more than $250 million to DIY artists all over the world. From our humble beginnings in 1998 as a small, one-man operation in a garage, to our current standing as one of the most trusted names in independent music, we've developed a host of services to help artists, including physical and digital distribution, warehousing and shipping of CDs, DVDs, and vinyl, promotional tools including our MusicStore on Facebook and Music Store widget, affordable web-hosting and design, download cards, disc duplication, and a credit card swiper program to increase your live merch sales.