CD BABY PRESENTS:

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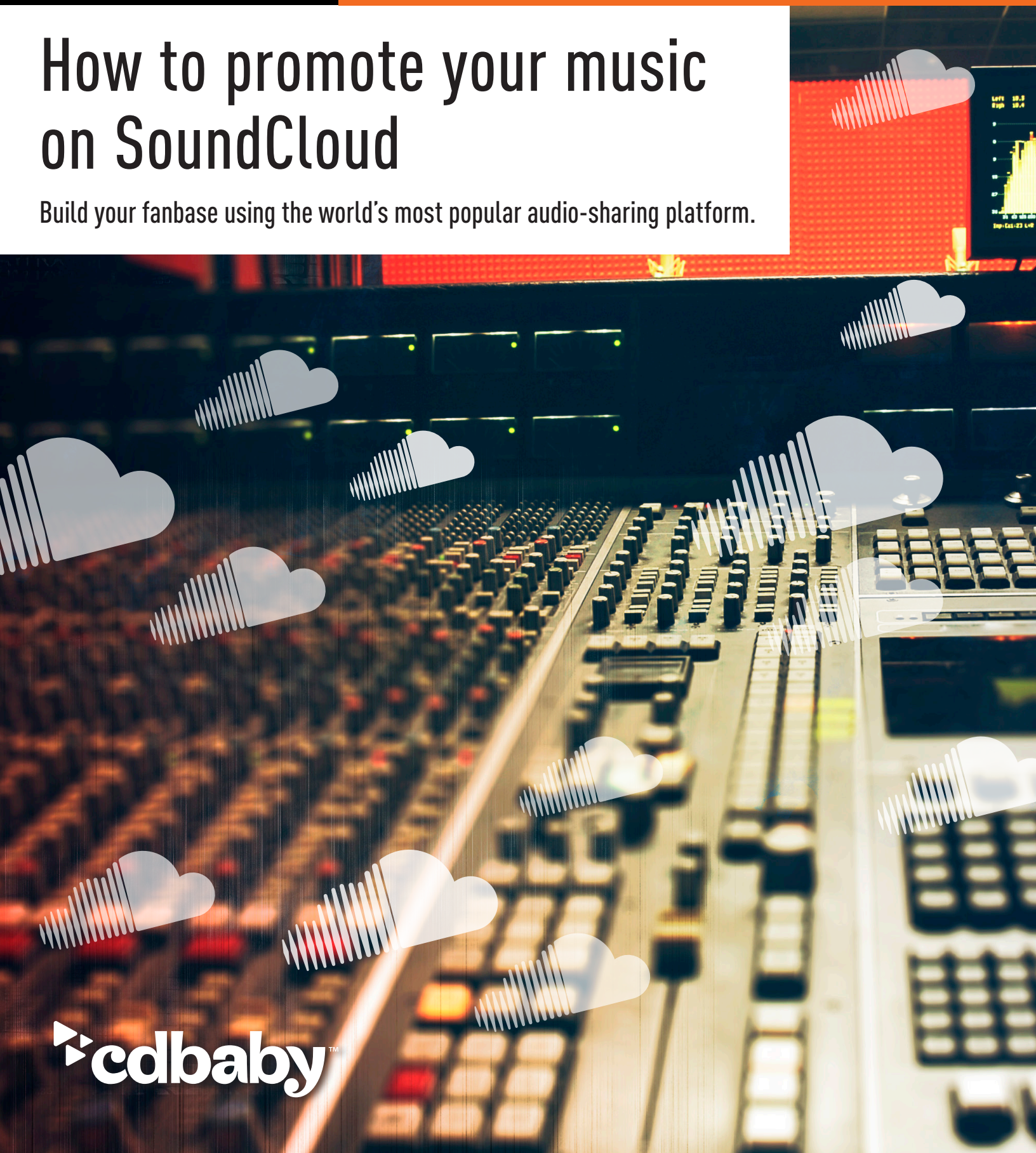


cdbaby™

Promoting your music on SoundCloud

Build your fanbase using the world's most popular audio-sharing platform.

By Budi Voogt, author of The SoundCloud Bible

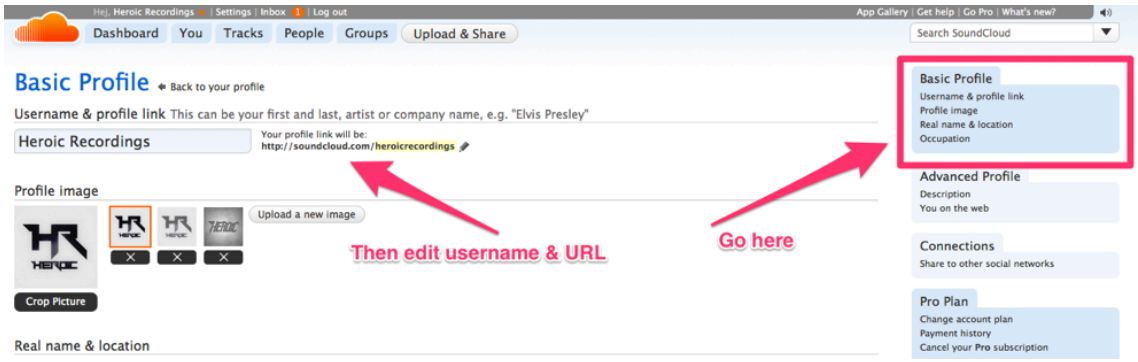
Introduction

Both up-and-comers and music legends alike are using SoundCloud as a central part of their music promotion repertoire. If you're not using SoundCloud to promote your music, you're missing out. The platform is a great way to build a community, get feedback on your tracks, and interact with listeners who are into your style of music. SoundCloud is easy to use and it's essentially free too!
As an artist, manager, and founder of a label, I've been using the platform intensively for years. In fact, SoundCloud has actually been the primary marketing tool for many of my releases. In this guide, we're going to talk about how to use SoundCloud successfully — from setting up your account properly to promotional tips.

Setting up your SoundCloud account

First impressions always last.
You want to make sure everyone that visits your SC profile immediately gets a good impression of you. Therefore, it's crucial you make sure that all the account details are set correctly.

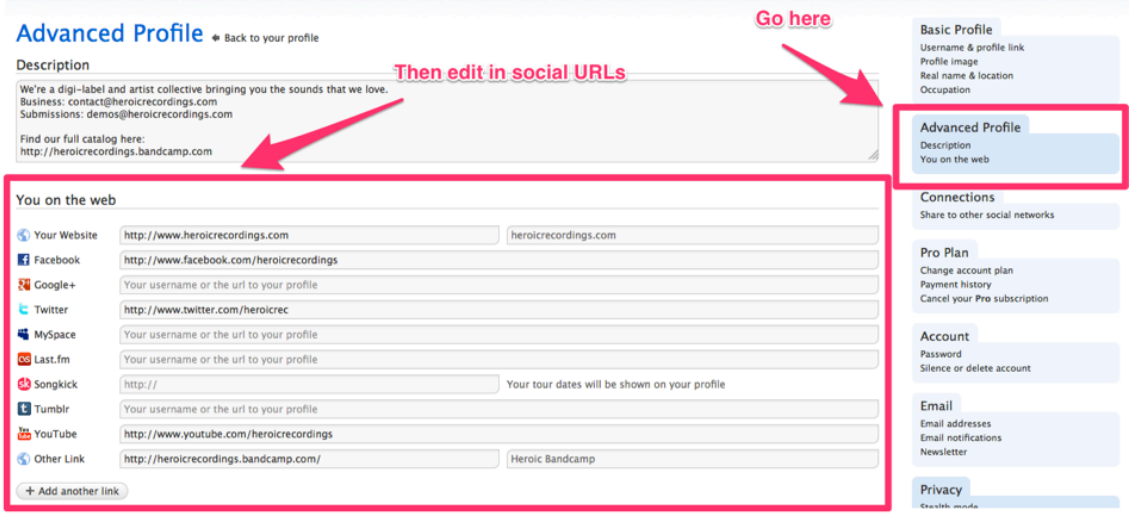
Your URL
The URL extension for your SoundCloud profile should be identical to the ones you have on other social media platforms. If you're running with www.facebook.com/thebestbandever, then you want the same '/thebestbandever' extension on your SoundCloud account. You can edit this in your account settings, under 'Basic Profile.'



Social Links

Increasingly, social media profiles have become the standard for the younger generation of music fans, particularly the 15-25 demographic. We immediately look to social-media profiles when we want to investigate a new artist. I'm sure you've come across a band you liked on Facebook, went to their 'about' section and discovered there weren't any links to their other social-media profiles there. Annoying, right?

SoundCloud has integrated the ability to add social media links to your profile, and even adds the correct thumbnail images to the links of the larger sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). You can edit these under your 'Advanced Profile' settings.



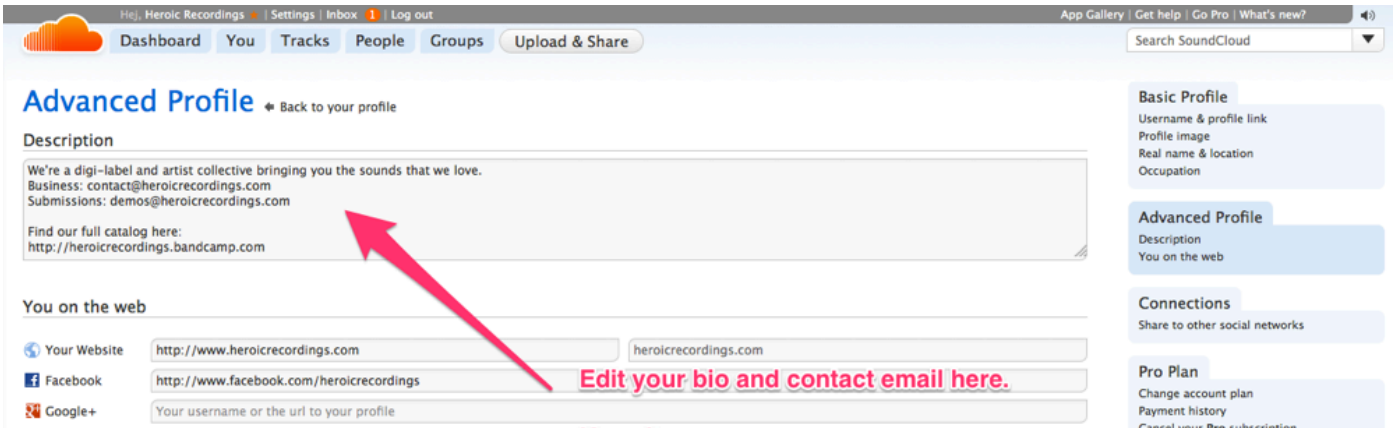
Description and details

SoundCloud is a community platform heavily focused on allowing you to discover what's trending and what the people you've already connected with on SC are listening to. It's VERY easy to discover new acts on SoundCloud.

A common mistake I see bands making is not providing a succinct biography and contact information on their profile.

Ideally, you should place your contact email address on top, or that of your booker/manager, followed with a short bio (about 50-250 words) written in the third person. Include info about who you are, what you do, any labels you're associated with, and any notable achievements.

Integrate these steps, and get your profile looking right.



The Content

People go to your SoundCloud profile to listen to your music. When they do, they'll either listen to the first track that's on top of your feed or to the one with the most plays and comments.

You want to make sure that these people hear some of your best material. You also want them to be able to easily identify the tracks, who made them, what type of mixes and recordings they are, and any specific information about sub-genres or influences.

Don't upload everything

For people who are new to your band and music, you only have one shot at impressing them. You know how it goes: if you discover a new artist, you'll give one track-maybe two-a shot, and if those aren't to your liking, you'll move on.

It's essential that you don't place everything you make on your SoundCloud account. Sure, a SoundCloud upload is less definitive than a track distributed to iTunes or Spotify, but it's still out there for public consumption, and fans you win on SoundCloud can certainly become paying customers for gigs and actual releases. Ideally, your profile should showcase your best finished work.

When considering an upload, ask yourself these questions: Is this ready for release? Do I consider this a finished track? If so, then go for it—put it up!

Some bands argue that SoundCloud is the best platform for sharing works in progress and getting feedback from friends and fans, but I'd counter that with the fact that majority of the biggest acts out there don't do it, and the benefit of that feedback doesn't outweigh the prospect of a great first impression.

Track Details
Your music should be instantly findable based on the track title, your artist name, and the keywords and genres associated with it. That's why it's important that you label everything correctly. With the new SoundCloud update, the platform now suggests that adding your artist name in a track upload is no longer essential. I say that's wrong. Why? Because with the new repost feature, people can now repost your tracks to their own feed, and the only way to then trace the name of the original artist is by looking at the minuscule reference to the original uploader. Not the way to go.

For track titles, stick to the following format: "Artistname - Track Title (Mix Type)."

In terms of genre, always make sure to place the correct genre as the first 'keyword' to the track. It's important to do this because SoundCloud has an explore function which indexes all the 'trending' tracks within a particular genre. The only way to define the genre is through the keywords, and the first one that's embedded in the player is often the most valuable in determining the genre. Alternatively, the platform's search function browses through keywords as well, so if you search for 'electro.' it'll find tracks that have that word embedded in its title, keywords and lastly description.

Other keywords that are important to include: are the original artist, associated artists, record label, and possibly the place where you're from or any notable clubs you've played.

Code of Conduct

Apart from the music, the most essential element of SoundCloud is it's community aspect. If you interact within this community properly, you'll be able to establish new relationships and develop true fans. **There's a few basic rules of conduct on SoundCloud:**

Actually use your account
This is the most common mistake I see artists making on SoundCloud. The majority of them use the platform daily, but don't bother to log into their accounts. They don't interact with the stuff they like. An artist who stays engaged and maintains a lively account is much more likely to foster a community. It will also force you to get a true feel of the intricacies of the platform. So, every time you use it, log in, like the tracks you love, and keep it buzzing.

Never spam
The whole idea behind the comment system and the waveform players is that people should be able to leave precise and constructive feedback on the tracks. It's supposed to add value, to help artists make better music, and to allow fans to praise what they think is great.

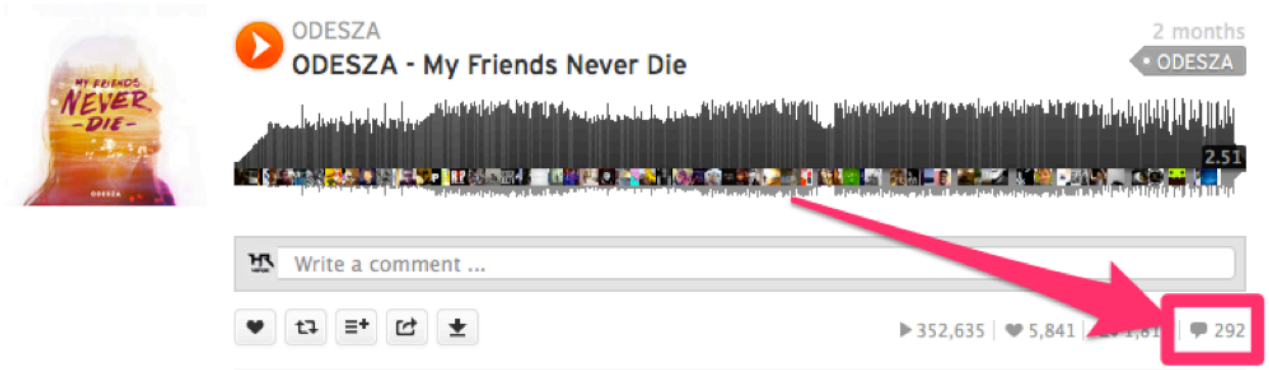
There's always been a group of people on SoundCloud that make comments along the lines of "Great track! If you like this, I just made a new EP. Check it out!" Never EVER be that guy. When you comment on an artist's tracks, make sure you're adding something of value to the conversation. A simple "Nice" or "Great drop" works, but doesn't hold as much value as actually giving intricate feedback.

Don't be hesitant to be critical either. Usually, the more honest and critical the feedback, the more likely you are to get a dialogue started. Elaborative and constructive comments can be conversation starters and will also lead people to check out your profile.

Reply to all comments

This is one of the most overlooked yet most powerful ways to harness the community aspect of SoundCloud. Reply to **EVERY comment** someone makes on one of your tracks. It's by far the best way to get people to come back to your profile, and they'll likely proceed beyond that (by checking your website or other social-media platforms) because it shows genuine interest in your community and fans.

Doing this is simple: go to one of your tracks and click on the little comment bubble indicator (the thing that shows how many comments a track has). That'll take you to a list of the comments where you can click on each of them to reply. When you do, place comments that actually make sense. A genuine "thank you" works, but prevent yourself from typing the same thank-you responses to numerous comments, personalize them.



These are essential basics that you should integrate into the way you work with SoundCloud daily. Implement these consistently and you will see cumulative results. Your fanbase will get bigger and they'll be more engaged.

Promo Tips

In addition to a smart content strategy and harnessing the power of the SoundCloud community, there are many other promotional tricks you can use to get your music heard. Next, we'll discuss **GROUPS** and how to share to them, embedding your content on other websites and platforms, using your spotlight tab, and leveraging free downloads.

Groups

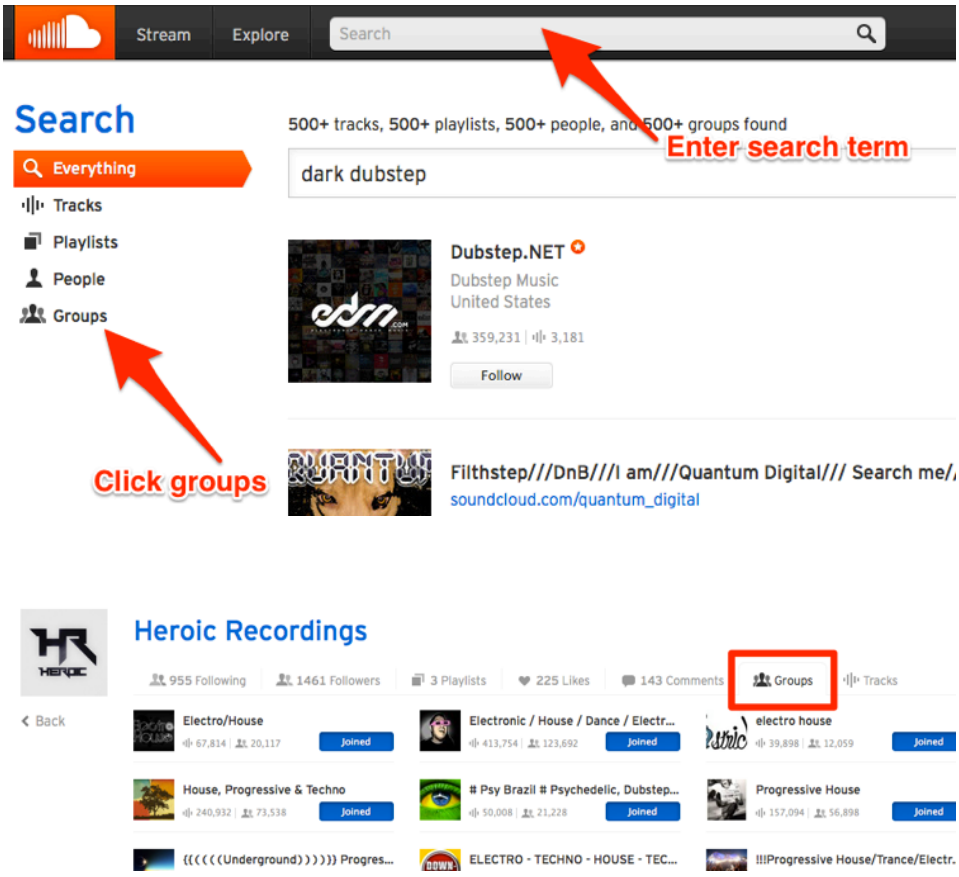
In SoundCloud, a group is a collection of people who share music. Only members of a group can share music amongst the group, and they're also the only ones who can hear all the music that's been shared to the group.

Usually, groups are focused on one specific genre or subject. You might see a genre-related group based on 'Dark Dubstep' or 'Melodic Techno.' As for subjects, groups can be used to catalog music for a specific purpose, such as a remix contest or a record-label submission pool.

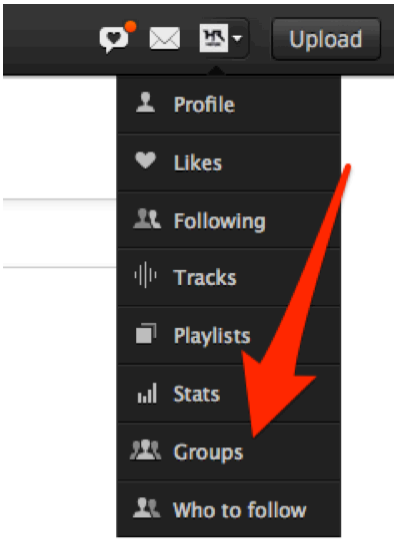
There are two types of groups: unmoderated and moderated. A moderated group has a moderator (usually the creator) who has to approve the track submissions before they become available to the group and its members. Once a track is approved, the account holder submitting that track becomes a contributor. Moderation of a group is a good way to reduce spam and to curate content. Unmoderated groups allow people to post tracks to groups without any restrictions.

Accessing Groups

In the old version of SoundCloud, groups were accessible from the main menu. With the newer version, you have to access groups from the search bar. To do so, you just type in a search query such as a specific genre or subject, and go to the "groups" tab.



You can also view the groups you are a member of by clicking on your profile thumbnail in the top menu and then selecting "groups." All groups you are a member of will be displayed here and you're also able to perform a search from here.

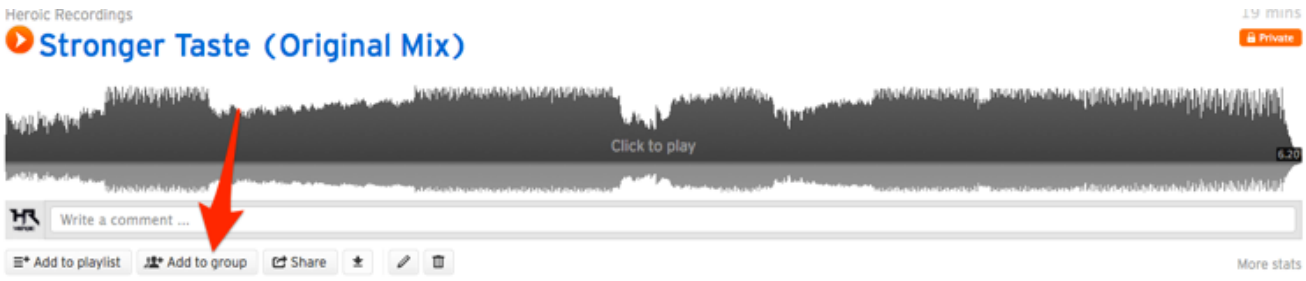


How to use groups

You can discover music you like by joining the groups focused on your genre. But more importantly, you can only share tracks to the groups you're a member of.

If you have a free SoundCloud account, you can share a track to a single group, whereas Pro and Pro Unlimited account-holders can share with up to 75 groups within 24 hours. After those 24 hours, you can simply submit it to more.

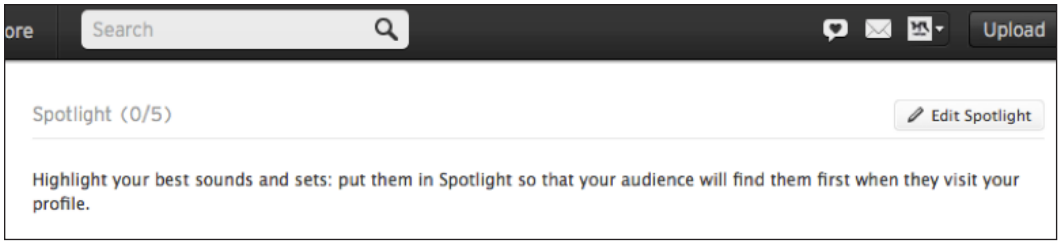
You'll make the biggest impact when you share tracks with large groups that are organized around your style of music. You should look for groups with more than 15,000 members. Particularly interesting are the groups with relatively few uploads and a lot of members, as it'll then take longer for your track to get snowed under by newer material.



To add a track to a group, click the 'add to group' button on the sound. Pay attention when doing this with private tracks though, as these will automatically become public once submitted. Once you make your track public, try sharing it to a group to attract a quick surge of traffic to the upload.

Spotlight Tab

The spotlight tab is an option that's only available for paid accounts. Both Pro and Pro Unlimited accounts have access to it.



The spotlight tab allows you to select up to five tracks or sets that you can showcase at the top of your profile in any order you like. This helps you put emphasis on your best tracks and can also give your profile a cleaner look. The tracks below the spotlight on your stream are shown in a reversed chronological order (so the newest uploads are visible first).

To access and edit your spotlight, go to your public page (click the thumbnail on the top menu and go to profile); then you'll see it immediately at the top of your stream. Click 'Edit Spotlight' on the right-hand side and add whatever track or set you've uploaded.

Embedding

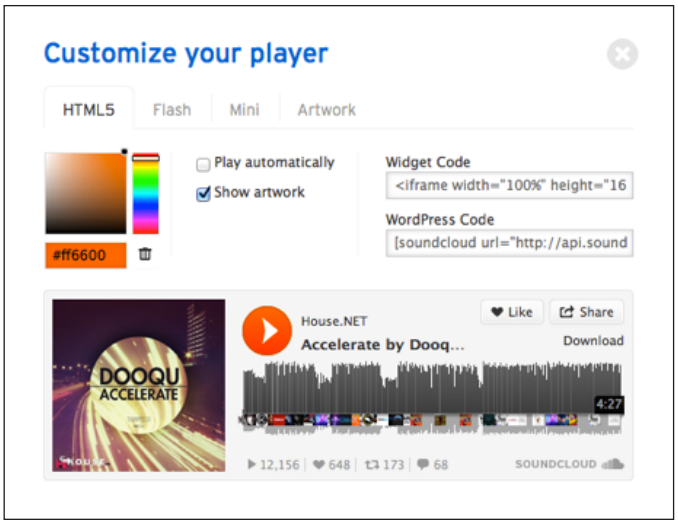
Embedding is a way to place a SC track somewhere else on the web, whilst still linking back to the original source. For example, you could embed your latest track on your website and all the plays from your website will be tallied to that track on SoundCloud. The embedded players are also called 'widgets'.

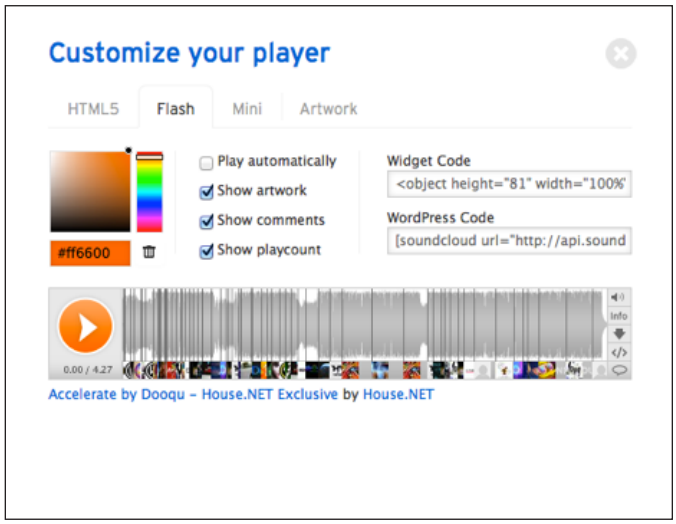
How to embed

You can embed a song by clicking on the **'share'** button for the track.

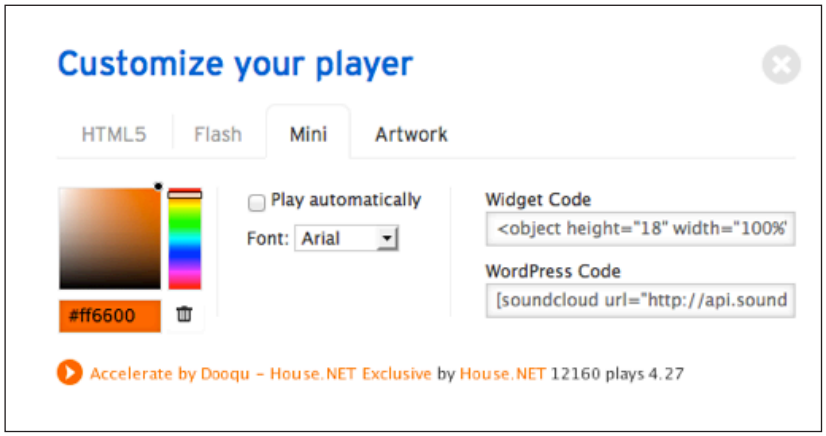
The **'widget code'** can be pasted into the HTML of your website or blog. You can customize this player by clicking the pencil icon beside the code. The **'wordpress code'** is a shortened code that works with Wordpress as long as you have a SoundCloud shortcode plugin installed.

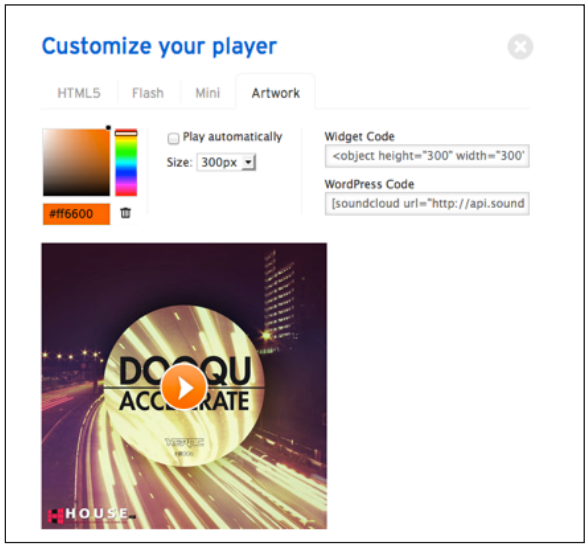
Free accounts are able to access the HTML5 and Flash players.





Paid accounts get access to the mini player (which is just a tiny stretched bar) and the artwork player (which is a square player with the track's artwork).





On all of the available players, I suggest that you display the artwork as it gives you a chance to do some visual branding. Also, I recommend you disable the 'play automatically' function. People tend to get annoyed when sounds are triggered immediately when they access a website.

Best uses

Embedding is a great tool to make your SoundCloud tracks available on your website and other social platforms. I suggest using the embed function to integrate your entire SC account with your website, so that it automatically displays everything on your stream (including the new stuff). Use the 'share' button below your profile picture to do this.

I also suggest you integrate your SoundCloud account with your band's Facebook page, as it allows fans to listen to your music from within Facebook.

For more details, check out **'SoundCloud Page Tab'** by topdeejays.com (https://topdeejays.com/apps/).

Free Downloads

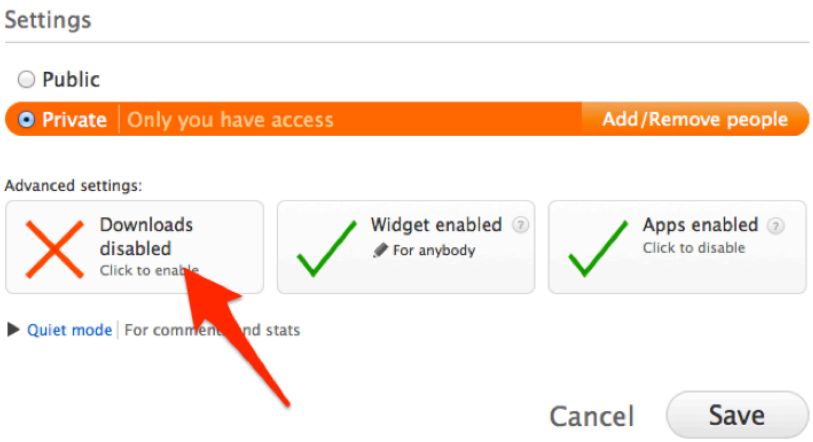
Giving away free downloads is one of the best ways to get exposure and encourage fan engagement on SoundCloud.

SoundCloud Downloads

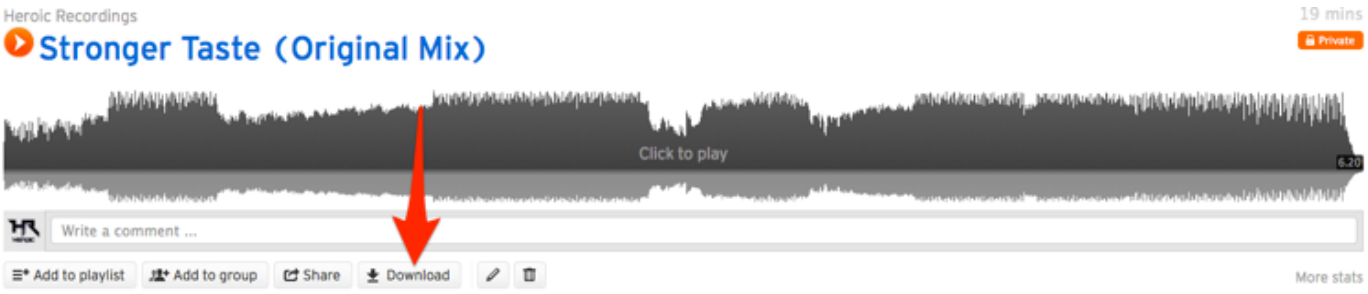
SoundCloud gives you the ability to enable downloads on a track. Note that it will provide the identical file that you have uploaded, so make sure to upload at least a 320kbps MP3 or 16bit+ 44.1hz .WAV file. I recommend you stick with MP3's as the majority of people don't care about the added value of a lossless file.

The number of times your track is downloaded also contributes to the popularity of that track on SoundCloud, thus making it more likely to appear in other SoundCloud users' streams and on the SC 'explore' page. If you are not a Pro user, the total number of downloads per track is limited to 100. A Pro account is capped at 1000 downloads per track and a Pro Unlimited account has no download restrictions.

You can enable your track for download by going to its settings and enabling 'download.'

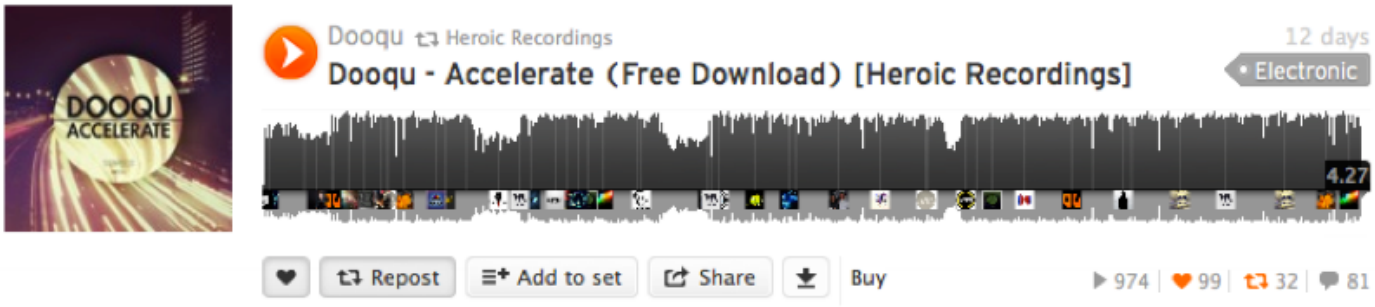


Once enabled, the download button will appear at the bottom of your track.



When making your track available for download, it is wise to note this in your track title.
Common formats include:

Artist - Title (Free DL)
Artist - Title (Free Download)
Artist - Title [Free Download]



SoundCloud unfortunately doesn't offer a simple way to link people directly to the download of your track. There is a way you can get around this though...

You can link people to the download by adding '/download' to the end of the track's url.
For example: **http://www.soundcloud.com/artist/track_title/download**

When sharing this link, it's smart to use a link shortener and to track how often (and from where) it's getting clicked. This can be done using services like: www.goo.gl, www.bit.ly, or tinyurl.com. I recommend using bit.ly for all your shortening services. Set up an account there. It's an awesome site.

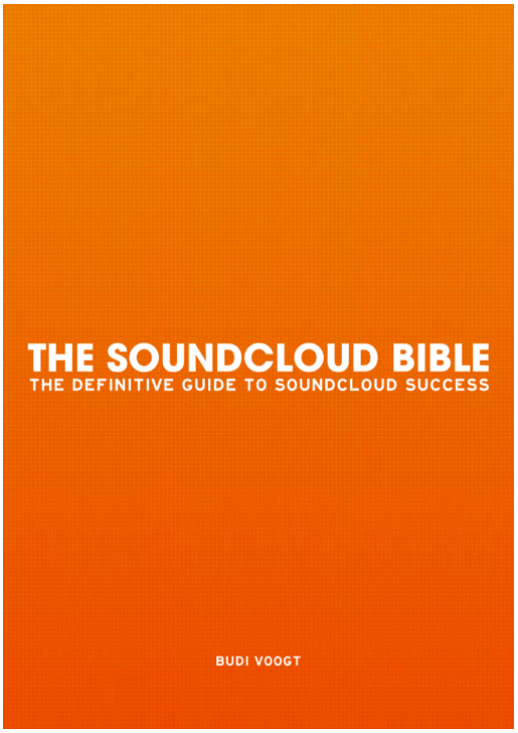
Last Thoughts

The tips and strategies outlined in this guide should help you successfully promote your music on SoundCloud. The key is to stay diligent and disciplined about maintaining your account and, of course, to upload great content in the first place.

If you liked this guide, you're in luck! I've compiled all my SoundCloud knowledge into a book containing even more insider tricks and tips than the ones we've discussed here. It's called 'The SoundCloud Bible' and is available here.

Budi Voogt, author of ***The SoundCloud Bible***, is a music lover and founder of Heroic Recordings, a record label and artist management agency.

For more information, visit http://www.BudiVoogt.com.



Hopefully this guide has given you a framework from which to start marketing your music to new fans. For more advice on social media marketing, PR for musicians, and independent music distribution, check out CD Baby's DIY Musician Blog — updated daily with tips from the experts.

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Get started at http://members.cdbaby.com