CD BABY PRESENTS:

Marketing Your Music 101

Essential Tips for Getting Your Music Out There

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According to Wikipedia, marketing is:

"the process of communicating the value of a product or service to customers, for the purpose of selling that product or service."

In the music industry, it's helpful to think of this process in somewhat simpler terms: **marketing is the art of telling your story to the right people at the right time, and telling it well.** Put even more simply: it's about making meaningful connections.

When it comes to music, there are literally millions of alternatives out there for consumers — and a lot of it is quality stuff — so you need to make a positive impression or emotional appeal before potential fans hear a single measure of your music. For today's independent artist, a good musical story (and how well it's told) can mean the difference between obscurity and stardom.

Feeling some pressure? Remember, you don't have to tell your whole story all at once. Novels unfold over several hundred pages. As a musician, every action you take is a chance to further your story and make additional connections — every show you play, every video you create, every new release, every email you send, every blog post and social media update you write, etc. But still, it's important to have a good grasp on the highlights of your musical story before you begin marketing.

So, what IS your story?

In order to effectively communicate your story, you have to know what it is first. Is it your biography? Your musical achievements? Your struggles and triumphs? A description of your sound and style? It can be all of these things and more. But most importantly:

1. Your story should be focused
Your story won't reveal all of the beauty and complexity of you as a person or as an artist. That'd take too long to tell. Instead, concentrate on the three things you most want to convey about your life and music.

2. Your story should be authentic
Don't pretend to be something you're not, unless that persona is crucial to your music. Your audience (and the media) will see through it.

3. Your story should be unique
What sets you apart from other bands? What aspect of your life will connect on an emotional level with listeners? THAT detail is what fans will be drawn to, what music critics will write about, and what should be supercharged at the center of your story.

Still having trouble finding the heart of your story?

Think about your musical inspirations, career highlights, the origins of your lyrics, technical innovations in your music, personal revelations that inform your career, anything funny or gimmicky about your music, band drama, themes that run throughout your songs, horror stories from touring, or the things you're proudest of in life.

Anything strike you as memorable or noteworthy? That's the beginning of your story right there!

The #1 most important thing you can do to market your music: build your email list

When you tell your story, you want to be sure your fans are listening, right?

Well, despite the huge popularity of social media, EMAIL is still the most effective form of online marketing. Whenever you encourage fans to purchase your music, watch a YouTube video, or leave a positive review, you're going to get better results from a well-written email than from a series of tweets or Facebook posts — partially because only a small percentage of your followers on social media will see those posts, but also because studies show fans are far more likely to take action based on an email. Plus, when you collect a fan's email address, you have the opportunity to continue telling your story to them over the longhaul, and you'll have repeated opportunities to sell your music too.

But there's another important reason why you should be focusing most of your marketing efforts on building your email list: **you need to OWN your fan relationships.**

When you build a following on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, those companies are in control of not only HOW and WHEN you communicate with fans, but also WHO gets to see your content. Plus, remember Myspace? You don't want to spend years collecting likes on Facebook only to lose those fan connections to changes in social media trends or functionality.
Your email list is forever!

Prioritize your band website

Nowadays, "web presence" is a big part of telling your story. In fact, the majority of your fans will probably discover you ONLINE first. When it comes to establishing your web presence, your band website is more important than any single social media platform.
Here are four reasons why:

1. You need design control
Social media = generic profiles plastered with ads and other distractions.
With your own site, you create a design that suits your vibe and functions the way you need it to. Plus, the layout won't change unexpectedly overnight. (We're looking at YOU Facebook!)

2. You need to own your fan relationships
As mentioned above, social media platforms come and go. Your website is here to stay. When a visitor to your site provides you with their contact info, YOU own that relationship — NOT Facebook or Twitter — and YOU get to decide how and when you communicate with those fans.

3. You need to create a rewarding user experience
Facebook wants users to click on paid ads for smartphones, laptops, and blow dryers. They want you to play MafiaWars and Farmville. It's how they pay the bills (oh, and shareholders, too).
On your own site, you call the shots. You can create a rich experience that feels more focused, personal, and clutter-free.

4. You need your own Dot Com
What's easier to say and remember, "ElvisPresley.com" or "Facebook.com/ElvisPresleyMusic?" Which do you think Google likes more when someone is searching online? Owning your band's domain name keeps things simple for you AND your fans. Plus, you don't want someone else snagging that URL!

Your website is like a train station, the hub for all your online content

Think of your website as your central headquarters where you'll house most of your original content, blog posts, tour diaries, interviews, music store, etc. From this hub you'll "push content out" to your satellite offices — your social media profiles!

Another way to envision this process is to imagine that your website is a train station and the various social media services you use are inbound and outbound trains that your fans will travel on.

Some travelers are riding the inbound Twitter or Facebook train; they'll see a status update or tweet that leads them to your website. Other travelers are already at the train station, checking out a YouTube video or Instagram photograph that you've embedded on your website, and off they go — bound

for one of your satellite offices. The important thing is that your fans visit your website at SOME POINT during the promotion/engagement process, and that you encourage them to subscribe to your email newsletter, download a free MP3, purchase music, leave a blog comment, watch an embedded YouTube video, share your content with friends, come see you perform live, or follow you on social media.

Use social media to tell your story long before (and long after) an album release

Marketing begins well before you have a new album or single to launch, and it continues as you tour, put out videos, and begin writing and recording your next record. By using social-media (along with your blog, email newsletter, and good old-fashioned stage banter), you can:

- Tease details about your products to build interest before they're released
- Include your fans in the creation process by asking for feedback on demos, alternate mixes, song sequencing, tour routing, etc.
- Encourage micro-patronage support and pre-sales through crowdfunding
- Keep fans updated on concert details, release dates, etc.
- Get them to spread the word about your music by sharing your content

The #1 rule of social media: don't overcommit!

Music marketing gurus like to repeat the mantra "be everywhere." **Well, they're wrong.**

It's easy to dive into the deep end of social-media; it's harder to swim back out. If you're trying to balance practices, touring, recording, and marketing, don't get carried away. You'll drive yourself crazy and do a bad job at social media while you're at it. Instead, **pick one. It's better to use one social-media platform well than to juggle three poorly.**

When your music career has advanced to the place where you really SHOULD "be everywhere," you'll also be in a position to enlist some help with your online marketing.

The importance of YouTube for today's independent musician

Unless you've had your head buried underground for the last seven years, you probably already know how YouTube has drastically changed the music industry. There are five good reasons why you should boost your presence on YouTube today:

- YouTube is the #1 search engine for music fans
- YouTube has become the #1 listening platform for younger music fans
- Many artists have built their careers strictly through YouTube

- There's no easier way to beam your music/brand/personality into someone's ears/eyes/home/imagination than through engaging music videos
- Big ad-revenue is being generated by YouTube and you can earn your share by monetizing your music across the YouTube platform

Approaching the music media

Alright, now that you've developed your story, established your web presence, and have started engaging with fans on social media and YouTube, it's time to get some press coverage for your music. Why? Positive media attention can help you exponentially extend the reach of your music.

So, who might be interested in covering your story, playing your music, or writing a review?

- Local newspapers and weeklies
- Local cultural or art magazines
- Local TV news or news magazines
- Community, college, and online radio
- Podcasts
- Music blogs
- And many more

But how do you go about contacting the media?

Actually, it's simpler than you might think. There are five basic rules for independent music PR:

1. Contact the correct person
Make sure you have the right name and email/mailing address for relevant program directors, podcast hosts, music editors, etc.

2. Keep your pitch short and sweet
As they say, "don't bore us; get to the chorus!" Communicate in the first few sentences who you are and why they might be interested in your music. Follow up with a paragraph that contains supporting details, links to your music and supplementary information (online press release), and then sign off.

3. Be polite, never pushy
If you rub someone the wrong way, they're not going to help you. It's common sense. If they respond and say "no thank you," stay calm and try not to take it personally. They may just have too much on their plate right now.

4. Follow up
If you don't hear back from them after a week or so, go ahead and send another email asking if they've had a chance to check out your music. You know that old saying about the squeaky wheel getting the grease!

5. Deliver
If someone writes you back with interview questions, a request for additional MP3s or photos, or wants you to appear on-air, be sure to respond to them ASAP with a gracious "hell yes" and then-rock it!

You're ready to tell your musical story to the world!

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 (http://diymusican.cdbaby.com) — updated daily with tips from the experts.

Reach the whole world with your music -
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