How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet

The Musician's Guide to Effective
Music Promotion on the Internet

September 2003 Edition

by David Nevue
http://www.davidnevue.com

Brought to You By...

The Music Biz Academy

http://www.musicbizacademy.com

The Music Biz Academy Bookstore

http://www.musicbizbookstore.com

Additional Resources for the Serious Musician...
Music is Your Business
Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook
The Musician's Atlas
The Indie Bible

.

Table of Contents

First Things First -
Stuff to Read Before You Start Exploring

Thank you for purchasing the 2003 edition of "How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet!"

So, do you want to be an Internet marketing expert? Do you want to promote your music to millions of listeners and find new and interesting ways to advance your music career using the Internet? Since you've purchased this book, I presume you do. However, it's also very natural for you to be skeptical about whether or not the Internet can really be *that* useful for promoting your music. While the possibilities may be exciting, you may be asking yourself questions like, is it really possible to sell my music on the Internet and make money? Can I really use the Internet to advance my music career? The short answer to both questions is "yes." I have proven it can be done with my own music and my objective with this book is to outline the strategies I myself have used to market my music, advance my career, and bring in significant income all via the Internet.

Before getting into the guts of this book, however, I thought it might be beneficial for you to know who you're getting advice from and why you should listen to anything I have to say. My name is David Nevue, and I'm the author of this book. I am an independent musician (a solo pianist) and I've been promoting my music on the Internet since 1995. It's been a very long, interesting road. Let me tell you a little bit about my background...

A Brief History

In 1993, I started working at Symantec Corporation, the makers of Norton Antivirus, Norton Internet Security, Norton Utilities and other software. I was working there when the Internet first came into public view. I can still remember the first time I saw a web browser while on the job. I was a member of Symantec's online support team when the Internet was 'born' into public awareness.

In 1995, I started marketing my music on the Internet. Like most musicians still do today, I put up a web page with some sound samples (*.wav files in those days) and hoped somebody would find me. My first year online, I sold just two CDs. I wasn't satisfied with that at all. So, I began experimenting with a number of different marketing strategies. After numerous failures and a few successes, I started seeing some CD sales. I knew I was on to something when I began selling four or five CDs a week. That gave me the idea to write this book, the first edition of which came out in November of 1997.

Since that time, I've continued to build onto my success, and over the last seven years I've expanded my online music business to include not only sales of my CDs, but books (like this one), sheet music (transcriptions of my own works), information and advertising. Needless to say, the income generated through these music-related projects has made a huge impact on my ability to both promote my music and to create more products, like CDs, to sell to fans.

In November of 2001, I finally achieved a longtime dream: I quit my day job at Symantec to work in the online music business full-time. Now I have more time to work on my music and spend with my family. Life has never been better or more fulfilling.

So, to answer the questions that may still be lingering in your mind, yes, you can make money selling your music on the Internet. I've done it, and if you put the effort into it, you can do it, too. The next question you may have is, "How much money can I make?"

Will You Make Millions?

Let's get real for a moment. Promoting your music successfully on the Internet is hard work. Don't ever forget that. The Internet is not a shortcut to success -- it's simply another tool, and one that can be very effective in the hands of someone who knows how to use it. Still, you must have realistic expectations before investing your time and money marketing your music online. As a musician you are going to face some very heated competition. There are literally *thousands* of musicians with established web pages on the Internet. How can you compete with them? Not only that, but you are, in a very real sense, competing with every other web site out there. How can you possibly stand out in *that* crowd? Pretty daunting, isn't it?

I once saw a survey by Georgia Tech that stated that 41% of all Internet users had purchased music from the Web. That's a very large number of people when you consider there are estimates of over 251 million people actively using the Net (see http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/news.jsp?section=dat_gi for current web usage stats). However, a survey of *actual buyers* provided some very interesting statistics: 70% of all buyers searched for the item they bought, 16% searched for a topic *related* to what they bought, and 4% searched for the name of another product which led them to the final product they purchased. Adding it up, 90% of buyers used the Internet as a modern-day, digital Yellow Pages. So the question is, what does this tell you about selling your music on the Net?

Quite simply, it means that creating a web page to sell your music is *not* going to be enough. That is something I discovered very early on. Even if you submit your site to the search engines, you're not likely to see a significant traffic increase. Think about it. If 90% of the buyers out there already know what they are looking for and are searching for that particular item or topic, how will they find *you*, someone whose music they have probably never heard of? If they are not looking for you, they won't find you. So, what ARE they looking for? Therein lies the key. More on that later.

Here's the slap-in-the-face reality: In my experience, the typical musician sells between two and five CDs a year from their web site. Sales that low certainly do not justify putting your music online. Can you do better? Yes, you can do much, much better, but only if you have a good product and market it properly. Prepare yourself for the long haul and prepare to work hard. Success on the Internet won't come overnight.

As you read this book, keep these questions in the back of your mind, for they hold the key to successful online music promotion:

1) What is unique about my music?
2) What general style of music are my fans most interested in?
3) What other artists do my fans compare my music to?
        and most importantly...
4) What kind of information is my *target* customer searching for on the Internet?
5) How can I use that information to bring that customer to my web site?

Within these pages I will show you what marketing ideas worked for me and steer you away from those that didn't. Although I cannot make any guarantees about how well these ideas will work for you, if you put the ideas in this book into practice, you should see some improvement in your sales, as well as the overall income you're generating from the Internet. For me, the improvement was immediately noticeable and over time it has become quite dramatic.

So, to answer the question I posed at the beginning of this section, no, you are not likely to make *millions* on the Internet doing just music. But you can bring in a *good, steady income*.

Let me give you a tangible taste of the kind of income you can make: in 2002, I was able to generate an average of about $5,000 per month in total sales from the Internet. As previously mentioned, this income

comes not only from CD sales, but book sales, partnerships, advertising revenue, and other sources. The best part? Everything I do is related to the music business I love.

Of course, money isn't everything. There is still the question of using the Internet to advance your music career, and that's something that Internet can help you do also. I have been able to generate a lot of publicity for my music online, and not only do I sell CDs, but I often receive requests to have my music used in independent film projects, CD compilations, and recently I received a distribution deal for one of my CDs overseas. In October of 2002, I surpassed over 1 million song plays at MP3.com. That kind of exposure creates more demand for your product and your services. I get approached with interesting opportunities all the time. You, too, can use the Internet to create a huge amount of exposure for your music. The more exposure you generate, the more likely you are to gain new fans, sell more CDs, and of course, make those contacts you want to make within the music industry.

Getting Signed

A lot of musicians are looking to be signed by a major record label. You yourself may have aspirations of 'making it big' in the music business. If there is one thing I've learned over the years, it's that these days record labels aren't looking for fly-by-night musicians they can turn into stars. They are looking for musicians that are already *doing the work*. They are looking for artists that have proven they can create a huge fan base, sell thousands of CDs and sell out shows all on their own. They are searching for musicians who are already 'stars' in their own region. What I'm saying, in a roundabout way, is this: if you want to make it big and get signed to a major label, the best way to do that is to forget about being signed to a major label and do the work yourself. Get out there, play your music, build your fan base, and sell CDs. Your goal should not be to 'get signed,' but to bring yourself to a point to where you don't really *need* the backing of a record label anymore. Once you've reached this point, and you have a marketable name and product, *then* you might find some A&R people knocking on your door. Maybe.

My intent with these comments isn't to discourage you, but to *empower* you. You really don't need a major label deal to have a successful music career. If you are seeking only *fame* in the music business, then yes, you need the backing of big money. But, if you're just wanting to do music full-time and be the quintessential artist, that's something you can do all on your own, and the Internet can help you reach that goal. I'm living proof of that.

My goal with this book is quite simple. I want to teach other musicians to use the Internet the way I have. Not only to bring in more income, but to gain significant exposure for your music. I will show you how to target an audience *most likely* to buy your music. I will show you how to convert visitors to your web site into sales, and how to increase your fan base. I will show you how to sell more CDs, and how and where to distribute your music online. I will also tell you what not to waste your time and money on. Basically, I'm going to use this book to pass on pretty much everything I know about marketing music on the Internet. Whatever your end goal is, if it involves using the Internet to promote your music, this book will help you do that.

How to Use This Book Effectively

There are several points I would like to emphasize before going further:

1) Within this book, I will not dwell on topics such as purchasing a computer, setting up an Internet connection, or maintaining your web site. Yes, I will give you the basics (see *Getting Started* section), and I will point you to locations where you can find more information, but for complete details on these topics please do research other materials. I will make the assumption that you already have a computer with Internet access. This book will focus mostly on successful music marketing techniques.

2) If you already have a web site, you may be tempted to skip the *Getting Started* section. Please don't. Although this section is geared toward newer Internet users, I will, along the way, discuss some marketing issues which may be of interest to you.

3) I won't spend ten pages saying what I could say in two paragraphs. The reason this book is not 300 pages long is that it does not need to be. My goal is to give you the information and advice you need, quickly and to the point. It's up to you to take it from there and find success.

4) Once you put the ideas in this book into effect, you should begin to see marked improvement in both the number of visitors to your web site and your merchandise sales. The results you see, however, will depend greatly on the quality of your product, how attractive your package is, your style of music, and, of course, how well you market your music and target your web site. Successful marketing on the Internet takes an incredible amount of persistence, trial and error, business savvy and *time*. It's taken me years to get to this point, and I'm still learning, so don't expect to be able to put the items in this study into effect over a weekend.

5) Take the ideas you learn from this study and sit down and write a formal business plan. Set small goals to accomplish over the next several months. Don't try to do it all at once. Start small, build on that foundation, and you'll see a gradual increase in your sales and your site traffic.

6) Take notes! There's a ton of helpful material within these pages. If something I say strikes your fancy, write it down or highlight it *immediately*. That will make your life easier when you want to refer back to it later.

7) Throughout these pages I make references to hundreds of web sites. These sites are changing all the time and although I try to keep on top of them, it is possible that one or more of these web addresses may go out of date. If you happen to find a link that is no longer valid, please let me know! You can contact me at dnevue@rainmusic.com .

8) Lastly, you will notice that I make references to many different products and services throughout this book. The reason I recommend the products and services I do is because they appeal to me, personally, and I have found them useful. In other words, no one is paying me to advertise or pump up their services in this book. Every opinion expressed in this book is free of payola. It's just my opinion.

How to Receive Lifetime Updates of This Book

One of my concerns over the years has been to keep this book affordable to musicians. That's why I sell the PDF edition for less than you might expect. I want musicians to buy it, but I know from experience that we all have other priorities we could be spending our money on.

Believe it or not, I have had people tell me after reading this book that I ought to charge more for it. Here are some examples:

> "A million thanks to you for your book 'How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet.' I can't believe I got all this info for this price. In minutes, it answered questions I'd had for weeks. Especially helpful are the sections on audio clips, free sites like IUMA and vendors like CDStreet, and search engine registration. I figure you have saved me months if not years of trial and error." - John Edmonds, http://www.johnedmonds.net

I agree that the information contained in this book is worth far more than what I charge for it. The fact is though, if I charged $30 or $40 for this book, I'd sell a lot less of them, and I really do want to keep it afford-able.

So, I have come up with a concept that might be of benefit to both of us. As you know, the Internet is chang-ing all the time and as a result, I update this book at least twice a year to reflect those changes. As someone who purchased this book (either hard copy or PDF), you are *automatically* entitled to receive one free PDF update of this book, provided that:

a) you purchased the book from The Music Biz Academy and
b) I have your current e-mail address to send you an e-mail notification when the next edition is ready.

What I would like to do is offer lifetime PDF updates to anyone who purchased this book through the Music Biz Academy. The cost for this? Just $20 bucks. Again, as someone who purchased this book, you are already entitled to *one* free PDF update, which you receive automatically. However, if you would like to continue receiving PDF updates for as long as I continue to update the book (I've been doing so since 1997), then you have that option.

To purchase the lifetime update option, visit http://www.musicbizacademy.com/bookstore/lifetime.htm and place your order. Once I verify your previous purchase in my database, I will add you to my lifetime PDF update list. I would certainly appreciate your support for this book and you would benefit from my continued learning.

NOTE: If you're unsure whether or not you are in my database for notification of your free PDF update, simply email me at dnevue@rainmusic.com and ask.

With that behind us, let's get started....

Getting Started:
Where to Begin When You Have Nothing!

What You Need, What It Costs, and How to Get By With Less!

The nice thing about doing business on the Internet is that you can start with very little cash up front. If you already have a computer and Internet access, you can get going for as little as $50. The key is to spend your money wisely. Below is a short list of items you will need to get started on the Internet, along with estimated costs:

The 'Right' Computer System

Most any computer system you purchase today will come with built-in Internet connectibility. You can easily purchase an Internet-ready computer today for less than $1000, but expect to pay $1200-$1300 for a system that comes with all the most up-to-date goodies. If you are buying new and for the first time, you may want to consider purchasing your system locally. That way, if you encounter system difficulties, you can take your system right to the dealer for repair. I recommend you avoid buying a computer from mega-stores like Costco, OfficeMax, or Staples. You'll get much better service from a small, localized computer professional who cares about you as an individual customer, and who will give you *personal* service.

There are basically two ways to go when looking for a computer system: you can buy an IBM-compatible system with Microsoft Windows pre-installed, or go the Macintosh route. Many musicians prefer the Macintosh operating system and the Mac is known for its friendly, easy-to-use interface and innovative design. Personally, I prefer the Windows environment, but that's just what I'm used to. Either way, once you have a system, getting onto the Net will be a relatively simple process. Today's high-speed systems come pre-configured with all the hardware and software you should need.

If you don't mind buying via mail order, and if you also prefer the Windows operating system, let me recommend Dell computer systems (http://www.dell.com). This is the company I purchased my last two computers from (direct from their web site) and the support and service have been excellent. The one time I did have a problem (with a monitor), they replaced it immediately, at no cost to me, and paid for the shipping. However you go about it, when you are ready to buy your computer make sure you find out what kind of warranty you are getting. For a new system, your warranty should cover labor for at least one year and parts for at least three.

A Fast Internet Service Provider

Once you have the computer system, the next thing you'll need is an Internet connection. Most systems you buy today will come with several ISP (Internet Service Provider) choices preconfigured for you. All you have to do is select which of the suggested ISPs you want to go with. The cost for this service, on average, is about $20 per month for unlimited Internet access.

If you don't have preconfigured options on your system, or would rather choose another company, ask someone you know for a referral who is already hooked up and happy with their service. You can also look in your local phone book Yellow Pages under "Internet." Your local providers will be listed there. If you still have difficulty finding one, try searching The List at http://thelist.internet.com/.

10

Many people opt to connect to the Internet via an online service. America Online is by far the most common example. I recommend you contact an ISP rather than connecting to the Internet through an online service. An ISP account is generally faster, and you don't have to wade through advertisements nor use the clunky interface. With an ISP you get your choice of web browsers, better e-mail management, and usually cheaper rates.

The last few years have seen the rise (and fall) of ISPs that offer FREE access to the Internet. While many of these companies have failed, one called NetZero (http://www.netzero.net) has survived and is still fairly popular, though these days they limit you to 10 free hours a month. You can find a list of other free services at All Free ISP (http://www.all-free-isp.com/). When using a free ISP, you can expect to make certain trade offs. You'll have to deal with viewing sponsor pop-up and banner advertisements of one form or another, and some free ISPs require you fill in and return marketing surveys on a regular basis to continue your service. In other words, using a free service can be rather irritating.

For the absolute fastest, and hassle-free Internet connection possible, I really recommend you look into a cable modem or DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) connection. I currently use Comcast Digital Cable (http://www.comcast.com), and if you can afford to plunk down $45/month to get this kind of connection, by all means get hooked up. You won't regret it. If you're doing business on the Internet, you'll need the speed. To research other companies providing fast cable connections in your area, check out Broadband Reports at http://www.broadbandreports.com/ . And, if you don't know a thing about DSL and want to learn about the technology before jumping into it, check out the Everything DSL at http://www.everythingdsl.com/ . It's a great place for beginners to do research.

A Note of Caution! If you decide to go with a cable connection, you MUST have a personal firewall to prevent unwanted tampering on your system. If you are using a cable modem connection, you are *continuously* connected to the Net. The result is that you may be vulnerable to hacking. AT&T states this is not an issue with their secure system, nonetheless, I recommend you purchase protection. For the best in personal (and easy to use) firewall protection, I recommend Norton Internet Security from Symantec. Yes, am a bit biased since I used to work for Symantec, but even if I hadn't worked for Symantec for eight years, Norton Internet Security would be my product of choice. You'll find details on the software at http://www.symantec.com/sabu/nis/nis_pe/ .

For more recommended reading material on this topic, see *ISPs* in the *Quick Reference Guide* near the back of this book.

The Web Browser War

The next item you will need is a web browser. I really doubt I need to say much about this, since if you are reading this book, chances are about 100% you already have one. If not, a web browser is the tool that allows you to view web sites on the Internet. You basically have two choices: Internet Explorer, which dominates the market, and Netscape Communicator. Internet Explorer comes pre-installed with the Windows operating system, and you can download the latest version (or any updates) from Microsoft at http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.asp. If you want to use Netscape's browser, you can download a free copy from http://channels.netscape.com/ns/browsers/default.jsp . There are dozens of other web browsers available (for a list, see http://browsers.evolt.org/), but Internet Explorer is all you really need.

Finding the Perfect Web Host - A Place to Call Home

You will need a place to call 'home' on the Internet, a place to put your web pages so others can view them. A web hosting service will allow you to put your web pages on their servers for a monthly fee. You are,

essentially, renting the space from them. To assist you in finding a web host, check out Top Hosts at http://www.tophosts.com . This site allows you to search and compare web host services by price and other criteria. Many web hosting guides like Top Hosts are available on the Internet. For a list, see *Web Hosts* in the *Quick Reference Guide* at the end of this book.

The fee for web hosting varies, but generally lies between $10 and $30 dollars a month depending on the options you need. The more space and bandwidth you want, the more it will cost you. You may also be asked to pay setup costs which can run from $20 to $50. The company I currently use for web site hosting is ForSite at http://www.forsite.com . I have been fairly satisfied with their service, but the setup has, at times, been less than intuitive. Fortunately, their customer service is generally good and quick to respond. I might also recommend you look into HostBaby (http://www.hostbaby.com), a web hosting service dedicated to musicians and music-related web sites. HostBaby is run by the same great mind that started up CDBaby.com, which I will talk more about later in this book.

In addition to a place to host your web site, you'll need to register a domain name (a web address) for your web site. This 'address' is what tells the Internet what server your site lives on and where it's located. For domain name registration, I highly recommend the services of a company called DirectNIC (http://www.directnic.com). They will charge you $15.00 per year for registration. Other, cheaper options are available, such as Go Daddy Software at http://www.godaddy.com. Go Daddy only charges you $8.95 per year for registration, but I found their domain management tools to be very cumbersome. For that reason, I migrated all my Go Daddy accounts to DirectNIC. I felt it worth paying a bit more for the increased level of service and the incredible selection of easy-to-use tools that DirectNIC offers.

To make things easier on you, when you sign up with a web hosting service, you might ask about domain name registration. Most web hosting providers will take care of this entire registration process for you at no extra cost. You just pay for the actual name registration.

Note: As you search for a web host, it's possible that you might come across less expensive, 'non-virtual' domain name hosting plans. These plans offer you a web site whose URL is an extension of your web host's. For example, http://www.webhostname.com/yourcompanyname. It saves you the cost of registering your own domain name, but there are some extreme disadvantages to going this route. Whatever you do, avoid using a non-virtual domain name. Go with a standard, virtual domain name that allows you to have your own personal web address.

The Pros and Cons of 'Free' Web Hosts

If you've done any searching at all for a web host, you probably already know there are a large number of free web hosting services available. The first, and most famous of these is GeoCities, now owned by Yahoo at http://geocities.yahoo.com/home/ . GeoCities features a step-by-step setup guide which makes getting a web page online easy. A multitude of free web hosting services like GeoCities exist. Some are better than others, but, as I stated above, I really do recommend you set up your own domain name with your own web host. If that is not a financial option for you right now, a free web host may be an interim solution. To research free web hosting services further, I recommend you check out the long list provided with brief reviews at http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Web_Space/ .

FTP Client Software Recommendations

FTP is an acronym for "File Transfer Protocol." The basic function of an FTP client software program is to help you upload and download files to and from your web host's file servers. Once you have your web page

12

designed, the HTML document and graphic files that make up that page need to be transferred from your computer to your web host's server via an FTP client. FTP client file utilities are readily available on the Internet. I recommend either of the following FTP client tools:

CuteFTP: http://www.cuteftp.com/
WS_FTP: http://www.ipswitch.com/products/WS_FTP/

Personally, I use CuteFTP.

The web hosting service you sign up with can help you with setting up your FTP client and uploading your files. The process is very simple, and usually only requires you fill in two or three fields with information that your web host will provide you. Once it's set up, you can upload or download your files to your host service with the click of a button. For a few FTP tutorials, see the *Quick Reference Guide*.

E-Mail: Your New Best Friend

Electronic Mail makes it easy for potential customers to contact you. Most services, including web hosts, ISPs and online services will provide you with a free e-mail address to go along with your web site. If you'd rather, you can use one of the many free web-based e-mail services on the Net. The advantage of going this route is that you can check your e-mail with ease from any computer with an Internet connection. You'll find some of my recommendations in the *Quick Reference Guide*, or for a quick study on all the services available to you, check out the Free E-mail Address Directory at http://www.emailaddresses.com/ .

In Summary...

The tools mentioned above are all you should need to get started on the Internet. You will use these tools just about every day as you run your online business. If you are a beginner, and new to this kind of technology, some of what I described above may sound a bit complicated, but really it's not. If you take the time, you can learn all this stuff pretty quickly, and soon you won't even think about it - you'll do it all automatically. If you find you need more assistance with any of the above, free tutorials are available online for every aspect of connecting to the Internet. To find help with a particular topic, just go to Google at http://www.google.com and search for the specific item you need help with, for example; "ftp tutorial." It shouldn't take you long to find some useful resources.

Now that you have the basic connection tools, let's talk about how to design a killer web site....

Web Site Design Tips -
How to Do It Right From the Get-Go!

Design Considerations for the Design Challenged!

Okay, you've decided you want to create a web site on the Internet to promote your music. Now what? First, ask yourself this question: "How much do I know about computers and graphic design tools?" If you know little or nothing, you might want to consider hiring a professional. The appearance of your site is very important to success, and if you have any doubts at all about your design capabilities, trust someone else who can do the job and make you look good. At the very least someone may be able to help get you started and you can take it from there.

There are literally thousands of Internet-based companies out there ready to design your site for you. The fees for such a service vary greatly. Professional designers may charge you hundreds of dollars, smaller companies or individuals may do it for almost nothing. Regardless of the price, there is one thing you must demand from each potential designer: a sample of his or her work. Any professional or amateur designer worth their salt should have several sites they can refer you to to preview their work. You may find an amateur designer will provide you with great work for $150, while a 'pro' might create a very basic site for you and charge you $1500. One thing to keep in mind before hiring a professional is that most Internet-based companies are in fact run by one person. Knowing that, ask yourself... do you trust this person? Always, *always* contact past clients of anyone you are considering working with and ask how satisfied they've been with the service. One other note…*for every service someone will sell you, there is someone else on the Internet that will sell the same service to you for less or for free.* Don't take the first offer that comes along. But do keep in mind *you often get what you pay for*. A cheap designer might give you a cheap design.

There are many places on the Internet where you can search for and make contact with professional designers. At GetaGraphic.com for example (http://www.getagraphic.com), you can post your design requirements and available graphic artists will bid for your job. You can evaluate each bid, including each bidder's portfolio before committing to anything. If you see something you like, you can hire them on the spot. Similar options are available at Compare Web Designers (http://www.CompareWebDesigners.com), Elance (http://www.elance.com), and HostBaby.com (http://www.hostbaby.com).

Also, don't forget to make use of your fan base. Chances are, you have a dedicated fan who knows something about web design and has some skill at it. They would probably jump at the chance to help you get your web site up and running. You might offer them free CDs or concert tickets in exchange for their services.

If you'd rather not bother with creating your own unique web site, there are musician's communities you can join that will design and host a generic, but attractive web site for you. Again, you'll find a list of our recommendations under "Musician Communities & Web Hosting" in the *Internet Resources for the Independent Musician* section near the end of this book. Going this route, however, does create limitations if you are seeking to sell your music in significant numbers on the Internet. Be aware of that. The reason for this will become more apparent as you read on.

'Do It Yourself' Web Page Creation

Forget all that, you say... you want to design your site yourself! Great! Sometimes, the best way to learn is to jump in and do it. So, where do you start? Well, first you need to decide what kind of web page design software you want to use. Do you know HTML? If so, then you probably already know what software you want to use. For the rest of us, the answer may not be so simple. There are about a half dozen really good web page editors out there. If you are an inexperienced web page designer, you will very likely want a WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) page editor. This makes web site creation about as easy as it can be.

If you'd like to start out with a free page editor, Netscape Composer may be your best choice. Composer is built right into the Netscape browser (http://channels.netscape.com/ns/browsers/download.jsp). Numerous other (and much better) editors are available for a small cost. My personal favorite is the Namo WebEditor, and you can download a free trial version from Namo's web site at http://www.namo.com/. You'll find a review of the Namo WebEditor software at http://www.cnet.com/software/0-3227860-1204-8263920.html . Be sure to also read the user reviews, available from this same page.

For reviews of other editors see http://www.dooyoo.co.uk/computers/applications/wysiwyg_html_editors/ , and http://www.cnet.com/software/search/0,11066,0-3227860-1202-0,00.html . You can do more research at http://html.miningco.com/cs/htmleditors/ . Do some serious investigation here, because finding the right editor will simplify your work and prevent frustration later.

Planning Your Web Site

Are You Inspired? How to Find Ideas for Your Site Design.

Once you have decided upon a web page editor, you'll need design ideas for your site. One of the best ways I know to find design ideas is to simply look at what other musicians have done with their own web sites. One way to do this is to search for an artist in your same genre at MP3.com. Go to http://www.mp3.com, find your genre on the list under the "Listen" menu. Click on that, and you'll see a page containing a chart listing the top songs in your genre. Each song contains a link to the artist's page. Find an artist that sounds interesting, and click the link to go to their MP3.com page. Now, look in the left-hand column of the artist page. Under "Artist Extras," most artists will include a link to their 'official' web site from their generic MP3.com page. Using this method, you can visit a number of artist's personal web sites to gather ideas. You can use this same method at other artist communities like CDStreet.com, JavaMusic.com, and SonicGarden.com. All of these musician communities host generic artist web pages, and in most cases, artists include links to their own personal pages. After doing some investigating here, you should find enough web sites to provide an abundance of inspiration.

Copyright or Wrong?

I can't really talk about designing a web site without addressing potential copyright issues. Although it's not desirable, you should realize that anything uploaded to your web site (text, graphics, or even music) may be lifted from your pages without your permission. It's entirely possible that as you browse the Internet you may one day discover, quite by accident, that someone has taken one of your graphics or has copied a paragraph of text word-for-word from your site. Unfortunately, this has happened to me on a couple of occasions. If someone copies something from your web page without your permission and you can *prove* it, you *might* have a legal right to take action against the person. This, of course, depends upon whether the material they copied was, in fact, protected by copyright law; if the person wasn't using it under a 'fair use' provision; and if you can even identify the person who ran off with your material.

For more information on copyright infringement on the Internet, I recommend you check out the Copyright and Fair Use site at http://fairuse.stanford.edu/ . I also recommend The Copyright Pages at http://www.reach.net/~scherer/p/copyrite.htm which has information specific to music and copyright law. Finally, if you consider yourself an Internet professional at any level, I highly recommend you join the Gigalaw.com discussion list (http://www.gigalaw.com/discuss/index.html). It's a great resource for both questions and answers dealing with Internet copyright issues, and if you find yourself in a situation where you want to take action, you can get some free advice there.

The main copyright issue on most musicians' minds, however, is whether or not people are likely to steal their music from the Internet. If you put your own music online, are you in danger of losing your rights to it?

First of all, you would be wise to register any works you put online with the copyright office. It's really not that difficult to do, and if you have an entire CD of collected works, it's *very* easy to do. Just fill out Form SR, which you can get from the U.S. Copyright Office, and submit it with two copies of your CD and $30 to the Library of Congress. You'll find complete, easy-to-read directions and a downloadable form at the U.S. Copyright Office web site at http://www.copyright.gov/register/sound.html. It takes about a year for the Library of Congress to process your form, but once you've submitted your work, you're *officially* protected. Form SR will provide you with registered copyright protection for every song on the CD you submitted for that single $30 fee.

What does that copyright registration get you? Well, if someone does steal your work, not only can you prove the work is yours, but you can sue for damages. If the copyright infringement is deliberate, your attorney can initiate a criminal investigation.

Registering your songs using Form SR grants you these *exclusive* rights:

1) The right to make copies and duplicate your CD
2) The right to distribute your music
3) The right to prepare derivative works (alternate versions, new arrangements)
4) The right to perform the songs publicly
5) The right to display the product publicly
6) The right to perform publicly via digital audio transmission

Once you've registered your sound recording (your CD) with the U.S. copyright office, these rights belong *exclusively* to you and you alone (provided, of course, that you are the actual copyright owner). No one can take those rights from you.

So really, there's no reason to fear that someone would steal your work and then claim it's theirs. If someone does that, gets a top 40 hit out of it, and you can prove the song is yours in court by showing your registered copyright, you are going to laugh your way to the bank when the court awards you damages, which can be very high for copyright theft.

As to the issue of people stealing your music just for the sake of getting your songs for free, you do have some control over that as well. First of all, when you upload your music to your web site (which I will show you how to do later in this book) you have the option of just *streaming* your music. That would prevent the listener from downloading your actual sound file. You can also provide short clips of your songs, rather than entire songs for your visitors to listen to if you wish, though I don't actually recommend you do that for marketing reasons which I will discuss later.

Personally, I recommend taking two of your best songs from each of your CDs and making MP3 files available free for download from your web site. Encode the MP3 file tags with your artist information, web site,

CD info, etc., and let your customers have it. If they listen repeatedly and get attached to your music, they will come back and buy the CD so they can enjoy more of your music.

Don't get so paranoid about song theft that you actually prevent your customer from getting to know your music! You *want* them to hear it! I'll talk more in depth about this as we progress through this book. Let's get back to the main topic of this chapter; designing a killer web site.

Planning Your Online Press Kit

As you begin formulating a plan for the overall layout of your personal web site, try thinking of your site as an online press kit. Like a press kit, your personal web pages should contain the following:

1) A band or artist photo or photo gallery
2) A band or artist biography
3) Your upcoming performance schedule
4) Your products (CDs, T-Shirts, posters, whatever)
5) CD details (track list, song descriptions, album background, sound files)
6) The latest news about your act
7) Contact and booking information (e-mail address, physical address)

These are the things your web site should have at a very minimum, and these items ought to be easy for your web site visitors to find. If you hand your business card to a club manager who might want to book you and they look to your web site for information, they ought to be able to find any information quickly and easily. They will also need to be able to contact you directly from your web page.

Keep all this in mind as you plan your web site layout. However, as you will soon see, there is more to maximizing your web site for music promotion than just creating a personal web page from which to sell your music. Your online press kit will be just one very small part of your growing Internet presence!

Designing Your Web Site

The Essential Stuff You Need to Know

Before you go about designing your web site, there are two or three basic technical things you will need to know.

Graphic Types: There are two types of graphic files used on the web; *.gif and *.jpg files. All of your graphic files will need to be saved as one or the other. Which format is best? Well, here's the general rule: for photos, pictures, desktop scans use *.jpg files. For text logos, small graphics, line-based graphics use *.gif files.

HTM What?: HTML. Don't let the technical-sounding word scare you. All a web page is is a simple text file that contains lines of basic text commands, called HTML. If you're using a WYSIWYG editor, you don't even have to worry about seeing this 'code'. You can design your page in a layout format much like any desktop publishing program. But, as you become more skilled as a web page designer, I guarantee you'll find knowing the code useful. You can open virtually any web page in a text editor to see and edit the HTML code. If you don't know a thing about HTML and want to learn, let me recommend the interactive HTML tutorial for beginners at http://davesite.com/webstation/html/ . You'll find it's not nearly as hard as you think.

See Also: HTML Clinic: http://www.htmlclinic.com/
                    HTML Primer: http://www.htmlprimer.com/

The Index Page: Your default web page should be saved as index.html (or index.htm, it doesn't matter). The web server you host your web site on will use your index.html file as your default document. That is, when you type www.yourpage.com into your web browser it will load your index.html page by default.

The above items are the things no one tells you about web design but expects you to know. So, with those things behind us, let's move on!

Web Graphics: Get Everything You Need Free!

Everyone wants to have a web site that looks cool, but not everyone has the ability to design the images that make up a web site. Since you probably want more than just text on your web site, you'll be happy to know that there are many places on the Internet where you can find free web graphics. You can easily find web buttons, background images, icons and even entire page sets without very much effort. And in most cases you can use these however you like to aid you in your web site design.

I have found that graphic-related pages generally fall into four categories. *Basic Elements*, *Graphic Families*, *Graphic Generators*, and *Animated Graphics*.

Basic Elements would include simple icons, balls, bars and so on. These are probably the most common graphic-related images you'll find on the Internet, particularly on sites made by amateur designers. There are a few original artists out there that get pretty creative, but generally speaking, you'll see the same kind of basic elements as you go from one site to another.

Sites that feature *Graphic Families* make it especially simple to design your site as they provide you with a 'one stop shopping' type of experience. You get an entire 'look and feel' template for your entire page design in one, single place. The sites I've listed below all feature web graphic families that contain everything you need to get started. Some of my personal favorites include:

Elated Pagekits:	http://www.elated.com/pagekits/
GUIStuff:	http://www.guistuff.com/
B8 Graphics:	http://www.b8graphics.com/
Bimsan's Web Graphics:	http://www.bimsan.net/free/
Web Plates to Go:	http://www.webplatestogo.com/
ByDesign Themesets:	http://www.graphicsbydezign.com/
Free Site Templates:	http://freesitetemplates.com/
Iron & Ivy Designs:	http://www.ironivy.com/
Full Moon Graphics:	http://www.fullmoongraphics.com/
Art for the Web:	http://www.webpagedesign.com.au/
Dreamweaver Templates:	http://www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/download/templates/
Kemford Websites:	http://www.kemfordwebsites.com
RedLeaf SiteStyles:	http://www.redleaf.co.uk/sitestyles/
4Templates.com:	http://www.4templates.com/
Template Monster:	http://www.templatemonster.com/
Steve's Templates:	http://www.steves-templates.com
A+ Templates:	http://www.aplustemplates.com/

I haven't listed these sites in any particular order. Check them all out to see if the design styles appeal to you. Some of these are free, some charge a small fee. The quality of the sets varies from site to site.

Graphics Generation sites let you create text or icon-based graphics 'on the fly.' These allow you to create rotating text, 3D text, and many other text types in about 30 seconds with the click of a button or two. Once created, you can save the image file to your local computer. Some of these services do require a membership:

Zazoon:	http://www.zazoon.com/
CoolText:	http://www.cooltext.com/
CoolArchive:	http://www.coolarchive.com/logogen.cfm
Flaming Text:	http://www.flamingtext.com/
FlashButtons:	http://www.flashbuttons.com/

You can add some cool effects to your site using *Animated Graphics and Icons*. These items, which are usually moving, dynamic images, can bring your site to life. If you use animation, however, use it sparingly. Use too much and you begin to look unprofessional. You can find animated graphics at most of the sites mentioned above, but if you have difficulty finding what you're looking for in any of the above categories, check out http://www.freegraphics.com/ .

How Much Is Too Much?

There are all kinds of fancy things you can do with your site graphically. However, I find it best to keep your design simple and to the point. The more graphics you have on your web page, the longer your page will take to load in your visitor's browser. Some images get really bloated in terms of size, and will slow your page load time way down. To optimize your web graphics and reduce their file size, you may want to make use of the free gif and jpeg image cruncher at http://www.spinwave.com/ .

Now and then I run across a web site where the designer has gotten totally carried away with their images. For some reason, some designers think the more *stuff* they have flashing and spinning on their web site, the cooler it is. You know what I think when I see a web site like that? I think a eight-year-old kid designed it. It looks really unprofessional and I don't take them seriously. The truth is, in terms of web design, *less* is better. Pages load faster, and your site is easier to navigate. Whatever you do, make sure the text on your web site is *easy to read.* There is nothing wrong with using a solid color or even just white for your web site background. In my opinion, it looks much more professional. Want a classy web site? Just find a simple graphic theme that uses a few small images and repeat that theme throughout your web site.

Make It So! How to Make Your Site 'Live'!

In the *Getting Started* section, I talked briefly about FTP client software. This is what you will use to upload all your graphic, sound (see next chapter), and HTML files to your web host's server. Once you have decided on a hosting service, that service will provide you with the user ID and password necessary to gain access (via an FTP client) to your web site's file directory. This file directory looks just like what you see when you open up Windows Explorer. Using your FTP client software, you connect, navigate to the desired directory, then simply select and upload your files. Once you've done this, those files are visible to the world on the Internet.

You will find links to some useful tutorials in the *FTP Clients and Tutorials* section of the *Quick Reference Guide*.

'Advanced' Web Design Considerations

Flash!: Oops, They're Gone.

One of the most popular and innovative web design technologies in use today is called Flash. Macromedia Flash makes use of high-powered animation and pictures to essentially put a moving short film on your web site. Many sites use them on their intro pages, and they are very cool to watch. However, in most cases, Flash does NOT sell product. Depending on your visitors' connection speed, Flash can take time to load. Impatient web surfers may simply click away from it. The use of Flash, though very cool, may just put one more ob-stacle between you and your customer. You certainly don't want that!

You can, of course, use Flash as an *enhancement* to your web site without chasing off visitors that don't want to bother with it. To do this, I recommend creating a Flash presentation and linking to it from your home page. Then, if the visitor wants to see your cool Flash presentation, they can view it. They aren't forced to find some way around it.

If you'd like to know more about Flash, check out the Macromedia Flash site at http://www.macromedia.com/software/flash/ . You'll find plenty of examples in their Showcase.

Incidentally, I recently met an incredible Flash designer via the Internet. His name is Joe Sweeney and his web site is called Grand Masters of Flash at http://www.grandmastersofflash.com/ . He specializes in Flash web design for musicians. If that's something you are interested in, check him out. I was quite impressed with his designs.

Death to Frames, Long Live SSI!

Frames allow your visitors to open up more than one page at a time in a single browser session. Usually, frames are employed to allow a visitor navigating a web site to experience a consistent-looking menu struc-ture. The menu is often displayed on the left or top portion of your browser window, while the 'active' page is displayed on the right.

When this technology was first introduced, frames spread around the Internet like wildfire. It seemed like everyone used them. However, due to their sometimes tacky presentation, most casual Internet users despised them. As a result, most sites today have removed frames altogether, or at the very least made them transpar-ent. The most important thing to know about frames though, is that they prevent many search engines from indexing your web site properly. They also make it *very* difficult for your visitors to bookmark your web site, especially if they want to bookmark one particular page. Frames are a search engine traffic-killer, so treat them like the plague and stay away!

One of the main reasons web designers were attracted to frames initially was because it made managing web site content much easier. For example, if you had a web site with 100 pages that used the same navigation bar on each one, rather than creating 100 navigation bars on 100 individual pages, you could create one frame (for the navigation bar) and simply use that one single frame on each of the 100 pages. Thus, when you make a change to the frame page navigation bar, you see the change regardless of which of the 100 pages you are visiting on the web site. It's much easier to change one page than a hundred!

There is a much simpler, more attractive way to do this. If you want to create a frame-like site to make managing a large site easier, let me recommend you research Server Side Includes (SSI) instead. Server Side Includes are easy to use and will save you a ton of time in terms of updating content. If, for example, you have HTML that is exactly the same throughout your web site (like the navigation bar mentioned above), you create

a single HTML file containing this code, and then using SSI on your other pages, you call this single HTML file and it is inserted into the page as it loads. Perhaps the best way to explain it is to show you an example:

Navigate your web browser to the Music Biz Academy at http://www.musicbizacademy.com . Now, see the menu near the top? It starts with Home | Promote Your Music | Bookstore | Etc... That 'menu' is actually a Server Side Include. In other words, the menu information isn't really on the HTML code for this index.html page. Instead, I use a single line of code which looks like this:

<!--#include virtual="/templates/menu.htm" -->

This statement, inserted into the HTML of my index page, calls the menu.htm file and causes it to appear in the appropriate place when the page loads. The process works a bit like a batch file did in the DOS days if you are familiar with that concept. I've used SSI elsewhere on this index page as well. The navigation you see on the right-hand side of the page makes use of SSI.

So, why use it? Because these sections of the web page appear on every page throughout my web site. Now, if I want to update my menu, I update it on one file rather than on a hundred.

As you can see, SSI can be very helpful when designing a web site. For some really great tutorials on the use of SSI, see the *Scripts, Forms, Site Tools and More* section of the *Quick Reference Guide* in the back of this book.

One final comment on SSI. In order to use them, your web host's server must be configured to support them. If this sounds like a tool you'd like to use, ask your web host if they support the use of SSI. Also find out if any special file extensions are required. Many servers require a *.shtml file extension for any pages that use SSI.

Web Counters: The Pros and Cons

Although less common today than in times past, people still do on occasion wish to display a web counter on their web page. I really recommend you avoid displaying a visible counter until you are seeing a good deal of traffic coming to your site. If you're doing a lot of traffic, a web counter might help you solicit advertising from your visitors (I'll get into advertising later in this book). If your traffic is low, however, all a counter does is tell your visitor how *unpopular* your site is, which is rather bad for business. So how do you know how much traffic you're doing without a counter, you may ask?

Any quality web host will be able to provide you with a stats management program which will allow you to privately view detailed traffic statistics for your site. This service should be free (included in your hosting costs) and will give you access to some great information about your traffic. For example, you'll be able to see what pages on your site are most popular, where your visitors are coming from, how long they are staying and what keywords your visitors are using to find you via the search engines. This service should completely eliminate your need to display a visible counter on your web site.

If you decide you want to have a counter displayed on your web page anyway, you may want to check into an online stats management service. While these services are quite common, they do have some major disadvantages. First of all, nearly every stat service requires you display their banner or logo on your page to record your stats. In most cases, your visitor can click on that banner and see all your stats just as easily as you can. That's not always desirable. Secondly, you can only track the page the banner is on. So if you want to track all of your pages, you have to use multiple banners (and multiple accounts). If these are not an issue for you, then by all means, do some investigation into these services. The advantages of such services are that the installation and setup are easy. Other than copying and pasting HTML code, there's no scripting involved. Anyone can do it. Finally, some of the reports you can view are very detailed and useful.

BIG TIP: If you are making use of tables in your web page design, it's important that you place any third-party counters (or any graphic hosted on another web server) *outside* your table. Otherwise your web page may not refresh completely until it's finished loading that counter from the other site! This is very serious, for if that other site goes down, your pages may not load completely. Placing counters outside the table will prevent this.

If you'd like to research more web counter options, check out http://www.thefreesite.com/freecounters.htm for a long list of recommended free web counter services.

If you'd like my personal recommendation, rather than using counters I use FastStats, a third-party software program that analyzes web site log files which your web host can make available to you. It's inexpensive, and it's an invaluable tool. You'll find FastStats at http://mach5.com/products/analyzer/index.html .

CGI, Forms, Search, Chat, Guestbooks & More

It seems like every day it gets easier to add cool functionality to your site. Adding a search engine, guestbook, chat room or response form to your web site can be as simple as copying and pasting HTML. In fact, the process is becoming so easy that adding these features to your site has become almost trivial.

Whenever I'm looking for elements like these to add to one of my web sites, my first stop is always the "Webmaster Freebies" section of The Free Site at http://www.thefreesite.com/ . They feature everything from chat and guestbooks to javascripts, banners, polls, graphics, search forms and counters. The Free Site reviews literally hundreds of sites all listed by category.

In the *Scripts, Forms, Site Tools and More* section of the *Quick Reference Guide,* I've listed about two dozen other starting points when searching for cut-and-paste scripts, forms, tricks, and tools. Your options, in terms of advanced web site design, are nearly endless. However, let me remind you once again, *more cool stuff* does not always equal a better web site! Make use of these tools only if it will *simplify* navigation of your web site for your visitors. Also, keep in mind that when dealing with scripts, your visitor's web browser must be able to support the script to view it. Not all scripts can be viewed in all browsers. There are, for example, Internet Explorer-only scripts that won't work in Netscape. That's something to watch out for.

Incidentally, most web design software packages, including my favorite, the Namo Web Editor (http://www.namo.com/products/webeditor/), come with some cut-and-paste script functionality built in. That's something else to look for when considering web design software to purchase.

Finally, if you've found a super cool script and don't know how to get it up and running on your server you can have most scripts installed for you for as little as $50. Contact Ace Install at http://www.aceinstall.com/ .

Web Site Maintenance

I think it appropriate in this section to briefly address the concept of web site maintenance. It is of utmost importance to ensure your site is functioning speedily and without any breakdown in site navigation. If a visitor should come to your site and find a number of invalid links, they probably won't come back. After all, who wants to spend time on a site the webmaster cannot even be bothered to keep up-to-date?

There are a number of online site utilities available to help you maintain your site without taking up a lot of your time. Most of these 'tune up' sites provide a number of different services, including link checking, HTML

checking, spell checking, load time checking, image size reduction and even search engine positioning. Here are some of my favorites:

LinkAlarm: http://www.linkalarm.com/
NetMechanic: http://www.netmechanic.com/
bCentral Web Tools: http://www.bcentral.com/products/free.asp#tools

You'll find a zillion other site management tools, many free, in ZDNet's download library at http://downloads-zdnet.com.com/3150-2181-0.html .

Next, I'll address how to create and upload your sound files....

RealAudio, MP3, and Windows Media - Sound Solutions!

Putting Your Music Online - The Technical Stuff Made Easy!

I've given you some things to think about in regards to your web page design, but when all is said and done, the reason for having a web site is, of course, to promote your music! To do so, you'll need to have graphic representations of your CDs or other products on your web page. Not only that, you'll want to give your visitors the opportunity to listen to your music before they buy to entice them to make the actual purchase. The whole point of this chapter is to give you the basic information you need to make your music available from your web site.

As far as creating graphic representations for your CD artwork, there are two ways to go. You can scan the images from your CD yourself (you'll need a scanner to do so) or you can visit your local print shop and pay them to do it for you. This typically costs $5-$10 per image. The scanned images of your CD cover art should be saved to *.jpg or *.gif format. A *jpg will give you a better quality image.

In terms of giving your visitors the opportunity to listen to your music while they visit your web page, there are many technologies available that make this possible. However, I will only address the most common: *RealAudio*, *MP3,* and briefly, *Windows Media* and *Apple Quicktime*. These formats are all excellent, but each have their advantages and disadvantages.

RealAudio: Fast, Easy, Convenient

RealAudio comes from a company called Real (http://www.real.com/) that specializes in digital audio and video 'streaming' technology. This streaming technology makes it possible for someone visiting your web site to click on a link to your sample sound file and almost *immediately* hear your music. This is because when streaming is in use, the music plays while the file is still in the process of downloading. RealAudio is quick, easy, and hassle-free. Visitors love it.

Aside from the speed and ease of use, the biggest advantage to the RealAudio format is that it is incredibly commonplace on the Internet. It is the default choice for most casual web surfers, and you can make the assumption that most any visitor to your web site will already have the RealAudio plug-in installed on their browser. That makes it an easy choice for offering sound samples of your music.

The one disadvantage to RealAudio, however, is that the sound quality can be somewhat muddled when used on slower Internet connections. Today's RealAudio encoders make use of 'SureStream' technology to determine the speed of the user's Internet connection. The slower the connection, the more the sound will be compressed and the quality suffers. The good news, however, is that most casual Internet users are quite willing to sacrifice perfect sound for the speed that RealAudio downloads offer. Not only that, but more people are using faster Internet connections than ever before, which means the quality of sound the 'average joe' is receiving is considerably better than it was even just a year ago.

RealAudio files are fairly simple to create. I use Real's 'RealOne' software to record my music directly from my CD to a RealAudio file. A free version of the software is available from http://www.real.com/. There, on the Real home page, you should be able to find a link to the "Free RealOne Player." You may have to search around the page a bit to find the link, however. It's not easy to locate, as Real uses the home page to push their

24

14-day 'free trial version.' To make it easier for you, I've created a web page that will refresh you directly to the free RealOne download page. Just go to http://www.musicbizacademy.com/real.htm and that will forward you to the current RealOne download page. You should immediately be prompted to download the free version. If you try the link above and it fails to work (Real changes their page structure on occasion), please let me know right away and I'll update it with the new link. Just e-mail me at dnevue@rainmusic.com .

After you install the RealOne player, start it and insert your CD into your CD-Rom drive. Select the CD option at the bottom of the RealOne screen. You will then see your track numbers listed. Before you actually start recording, you may want to configure RealOne to increase or decrease the quality of your sound recording under the "Preferences" button. The higher the bitrate you select, the better the sound quality (and the larger the file which will increase buffering time). I generally use the 132 kbps setting. That is sufficient.

Once configuration is complete, you can record music from your CD directly to RealAudio with a simple click of a button. Click on the "Save Tracks" button, and you will be prompted to check a box beside the track you want to record. This will save your file to an *.rmj file in your local C:\My Music directory. Once you have that *.rmj file, you can connect via FTP to your web host server and upload it to your web site. You still, however, have one more step to go before you are finished.

In addition to this *.rmj file (let's call it song.rmj for this example), you will need to create what is called a 'metafile' to make use of Real's streaming technology. To create a metafile, simply open up a text editor such as Notepad, and type in the web address that points to the song.rmj file you've just uploaded to your web host's server. For example: if you have uploaded your song.rmj file to http://www.mysite.com/music/song.rmj , then insert that web address in your text editor. Now save that text file as song.ram (note the different file extension). Upload song.ram to the same directory as song.rmj. Now, when you create the "listen" link for your visitors to click on from your web page, link directly to the song.ram file. If you test it, the RealOne player should open up the song.ram file, which then buffers the song.rmj file and plays it. This process sounds complex, but it's actually very simple and once you've done it, you'll be able to whip out audio files in just a few minutes.

Here's a step-by-step overview to creating RealAudio files:

1) Record/Save your song to an *.rmj file using RealOne software.
2) Upload the *.rmj file to your web site.
3) Create a text file that contains one line: the web address that points to your *.rmj file.
4) Save your text file with a *.ram extension.
5) Upload your *.ram file to your web site to the same directory as your *.rmj file.
6) Link your web page directly to your *.ram file.
7) Test the link.

Got it? Simple, isn't it? If you do not wish to use RealOne to create your audio files, there are other options. You can, for example, encode *.WAV files from your CD and then convert those to RealAudio using conversion software, or you can use other software to create them directly from CD. In the long run, RealOne is probably the easiest, quickest way to do it.

For more information on creating RealAudio files, visit these online tutorials:

Include RealAudio files in Your Web Pages: http://www.newmediaone.com/support/ra.shtml
Improving RealAudio Input Files: http://service.real.com/help/content/audiohints.html
Streaming Audio Tutorials: http://streamingmediaworld.com/audio/tutor/

or visit the Real site at http://www.real.com .

MP3: CyberSound at its Best!

The other major sound format to consider is MP3 (also known as MPEG), which has, along with RealAudio, become an Internet standard. For *experienced* music fans with high-speed connections, MP3 is definitely the preferred option. The biggest advantage MP3 has over RealAudio is sound quality which, under the best conditions, approaches that of a CD. This gives your visitors a clear, accurate sample of your music, which is always a plus when it comes to selling your music!

The setup for MP3 is even easier than RealAudio. All you need to record directly from your CD is what's commonly referred to as a 'CD ripper.' For this task, I recommend the free MusicMatch Jukebox software, available from http://www.musicmatch.com. Simply configure your recording quality under your options menu, bring up your recorder (under View menu), select your tracks, and hit record. Once you have your *.mp3 file recorded, all you need to do is upload that file to your web site using your FTP client and link directly to it from your web page.

The disadvantage to using MP3 is that file size is an issue. As with RealAudio files, the higher your sound quality, the bigger the resulting file. The major difference is that for MP3 files, streaming technology, though it exists, is still limited to a few Internet users. I don't know of any easy way at the moment to create streaming MP3 files from your own web site unless you set up a ShoutCast (http://www.shoutcast.com) or Live365 (http://www.live365.com) radio station. To do that, you really need a dedicated server. What this all means is that for visitors using a modem to connect to the Internet, your MP3 sound files will take a couple of minutes to download. This isn't always convenient, and web surfers tend to be very impatient. As blazing-fast cable modem connections become more commonplace, file size will be less and less of an issue. For the moment, however, file size does still remain a small, yet irritating, issue.

The Best of Both Worlds

There is an easy way to get the best of both worlds, offering your customers *both* high quality MP3 files and fast, streaming downloads. How? Set up your own artist page on MP3.com. MP3.com offers MP3 streaming for its visitors, so, if you create an MP3.com artist page for yourself, (I'll cover this in more detail in a later chapter), you can send your visitors to MP3.com to listen to your streaming files. The disadvantage to this approach, however, is that your visitors have to leave your personal web site to visit MP3.com. You want to keep your customers as close to the "Order CD" button on your web site as possible!

To get around this obstacle - and this is the point I'm really leading up to - sign up for MP3.com's Audio Hosting service. This service allows you to link your web page *directly* to the MP3 sound files you've up-loaded to your MP3.com artist site. This means your customer can listen to your streaming CD quality MP3 files right from your personal web page! The visitor never leaves your web site. They just click on "play"and enjoy your music! The cost for the MP3.com Audio Hosting service starts at $4.95 a month.

Don't want to pay the $4.95 a month or bother with MP3.com? Then don't worry about it. Just keep it simple, create your RealAudio and MP3 files, upload them to your host, and offer your visitors links to both file types. Then your visitor can then decide for themselves whether they prefer higher speed (RealAudio) or higher quality (MP3).

Between RealAudio, MP3 and MP3.com, you have a number of options for delivering your music electroni-cally to your customers over the Web. Decide the method you are most comfortable with and go for it.

Windows Media Player & Apple Quicktime

What about creating sound files for the Microsoft Windows Media Player? Although a number of corporate sites like CDnow.com offer music samples using Windows Media, I generally don't recommend Windows Media for independent artist sites. The reason is simply because there is no need. It's redundant. You are more than covered using both RealAudio and MP3, which are the dominant Internet standards. The same is true for Apple Quicktime. Although Quicktime does come with some cool copy prevention features, again, you're just duplicating your effort, and a majority of your visitors are set up for RealAudio.

If you do prefer Windows Media and wish to look into creating audio content for the Windows Media Player, you can download both the player and the encoder from Microsoft at http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/default.asp . As for Apple Quicktime, you can find information on that at http://www.apple.com/quicktime/ .

For more help with music software in general, see the Shareware Music Machine tutorials at http://www.hitsquad.com/smm/tutorials.html.

One More Thing About MP3 Files...

If you make MP3 files available on your web site, expect to have them 'harvested' and distributed throughout the Internet without your knowledge. This is a rather strange thing, but I have seen MP3 files of my songs turn up in all sorts of unexpected places on the Internet. I have songs at MP3dimension.com, MP3mtv.com, MP3miracle.com, MP3corner.net, NewMP3Free.com and that's just to mention a few! I didn't upload my music to any of these places. *They* found ME!

This is not *necessarily* a bad thing. It does mean more exposure for you and your music, however, it's also one of the reasons I recommend you only upload two songs or so from each of your CDs. That way your entire albums aren't scattered across cyberspace without your permission.

To make the most of MP3 file harvesting, be sure you include your artist name as a part of your MP3 file. For example, mysong_davidnevue.mp3. That way if someone downloads your file from an unauthorized source there's no question of who the artist is performing the work. If they like your music, it will be easier for them to find you.

Take Credit Card Orders From Your Web Site - In 15 Minutes!

Making the Sale, Taking the Cash!

Accepting Credit Cards - In 15 Minutes or Less

To run a successful business on the Internet, credit card acceptance is an absolute must. There's no way around that fact. Unfortunately, accepting credit cards typically means setting up a merchant vendor account with a bank and incurring additional monthly costs. This makes accepting credit cards a tough call for most musicians. What makes the situation worse is that even if you accept credit cards, your monthly online sales in the beginning are not likely to exceed your monthly credit card maintenance fees. The situation is very nearly a catch-22: if you do accept credit cards, you may not cover your costs; if you do not, you will lose lots of customers and potential sales.

Plugging Into E-Commerce

Fortunately, there are options available to musicians that make it possible to accept credit card orders for your products without having to purchase a terminal or pay monthly maintenance fees. In fact, no merchant account is necessary at all. The first alternative I recommend is a plug-in e-commerce solution available from CDStreet (http://www.CDStreet.com). Once you've signed up, CDStreet will provide you with HTML for your web page that hooks you directly into their own shopping cart system. This HTML creates a "Buy" button on your web page, which your visitors click on to add items to their cart. When they have finished shopping, they pay via CDStreet's secure order process. Once the order is placed, you will receive an e-mail notification with the customer's information so you can ship the product. At the end of the month, you receive a check from CDStreet for your combined sales. The setup is incredibly easy, and CDStreet handles the entire transaction from credit card authorization to order confirmation. There is a onetime $29.95 set up fee, but after that, CDStreet simply takes a flat 20% of any sales you make. That means that once you are set up, you *pay nothing* until you make a sale. CDStreet.com is, as far as I know, the best, easiest way to get started accepting credit card orders via the Internet without incurring automatic monthly fees.

When Sales Exceed $100/Month

Once you are doing $100 a month in product sales on a regular basis, I recommend you move from CDStreet to a different company - CCNow.com (http://www.ccnow.com) . Like CDStreet, you use the HTML provided to link your web site to their shopping cart system. Also like CDStreet, when the customer places an order for your product, CCNow sends you an e-mail sales receipt telling you what you sold and where to ship your product. Twice a month, on the 1st and 15th, CCNow sends you a check for any sales made from your site. CCNow takes only 9% of your sale, but they also charge you a minimum monthly fee of $9.95. That means that until you are doing $100 per month in sales, CDStreet is the less expensive route. However, once you are doing over $100 of business a month on a regular basis, CCNow will actually cost you less. For more details on CCNow's fees, see http://www.ccnow.com/overview.html .

The only real disadvantage to CCNow is that you can only use it to sell physical, shippable product (like CDs). If you want to sell a service, subscription, or electronic file, check out ClickBank at http://www.clickbank.com. ClickBank specializes in providing services for the sale of 'non-tangible' goods. If you're selling access to a

28

web site, for example, when your visitor clicks on a specially-coded link, they are prompted for their credit card information. Once approved, they are forwarded to your "Thank You" page which grants them access to the files, pages, or electronic goods you sold to your customer. This technology is not cheap, however. ClickBank charges you a $1 per transaction fee *plus* 7.5% of your order total on non-shippable goods. There is also a $49.95 one time activation fee. There are, however, no monthly fees.

Making use of services such as CDStreet, CCNow, and ClickBank will help you determine whether it is worth the investment to set up your own merchant vendor account at a later date. Until you do about $500 a month in total credit card sales, you're saving yourself money, time and hassle using one of the above options. Once you are doing $500 a month in sales, it's time to start thinking about getting a merchant vendor account.

When Sales Exceed $500/Month

The whole process of getting a merchant account is rather convoluted. The first thing most people do when researching this option is to contact their bank. If you go this route, you can expect to pay around $35 for an application fee. If you are accepted, your bank will provide you with a merchant account, and usually the software you'll need to set yourself up on the Internet. However, when I investigated this option for myself, I found that most of the people at the bank really had no idea how to help me set up my Internet business. They were accustomed to helping businesses set up terminals at physical locations, and seemed to lack the knowledge to get my online store off the ground.

In the end, I decided to see if I could find an Internet-based merchant account provider who understood the needs of an Internet-run business. After spending several weeks investigating dozens of online options, I decided to go with a company called Merchant Card Services (http://merchantcardservicesinc.com/) . Tim Mahan, the company owner, worked with me every step of the way and took what could have been a painful, complicated process and made it simple. I can highly recommend him. His fees and rates are excellent!

A second option worth looking into is the directNIC MerchantAccount service at https://merchant.directnic.com/ . They claim 100% approval rate and market themselves to small businesses. While I have not used their merchant account services, I have been *extremely* impressed with directNIC as a company through my experience with them as a domain registrar. Their support is excellent, and in my mind, that makes them worth some serious investigation.

To set up your own merchant vendor account, you can expect to pay about $300 up front. Thereafter, you'll pay monthly fees, the total of which will depend upon both the number of your transactions and the value of your sales. You can expect, in the beginning, to pay about $30-$40/month in bank fees. This is why you want to wait until you are doing $500/month or more in business before going this route. Once you exceed $500/month, your own vendor account becomes, by far, the least expensive solution.

Your Shopping Cart - One Easy, Inexpensive Solution

All a merchant account does is give you the bank connections you need to process credit card orders via the Internet. In addition to this, you'll need a shopping cart system, that is, a system that provides the actual online 'shopping' experience for your customers. Some merchant account vendors will provide you with a free shopping cart solution when you sign up. However, I have found these to be rather generic. So, I researched over 100 different systems on my own, focusing on inexpensive, yet quality solutions. I settled on Mal's E-Commerce (http://www.mals-e.com/). The price for Mal's shopping cart is unbeatable, a mere $6 per month for an attractive, customizable shopping cart that hooks directly into your Internet merchant account payment gateway (the system works very well with Merchant Card Services mentioned above). The cart also includes built-in support for affiliate programs, affiliate reporting, and electronic product downloads (such as PDFs).

These features are unheard of in a cart so inexpensive! Not only that, the technical support is, without a doubt, the best I've ever received from any software vendor. Whenever I have had a question, I e-mailed support and have almost always received a response from Mal himself, the writer of the program, within just a few hours. You won't find a much better or less expensive shopping cart system than the one Mal's E-Commerce provides.

Your Merchant Account - A Technology Overview

The whole merchant account thing may seem a bit overwhelming. The process is not exactly easy to comprehend, especially when you are just starting out. Here's how the process works:

1) Your customer clicks on a **Buy** or **Order** button from your web site 'store'.
2) The item is added to their **Shopping Cart**. From here, your customer can opt to either "continue shopping," which takes them back to your store, or they can **Check Out**.
3) Once they **Check Out**, the customer is prompted for their name, address, and credit card info.
4) They then **Submit** their info to initiate the order. This information is sent to a payment **Gateway**, where the credit card number is authenticated, and the bank verifies the customer's funds. This is where credit cards are approved or declined.
5) Once **Approved**, the customer returns to your "**Thank You**" page, where they are given instructions about their order.
6) The customer receives an **Order Confirmation** via e-mail.
7) The system sends you a copy of the **Order Confirmation**, with additional details so you can ship the product.
8) Bank funds are automatically transferred from their account, and deposited in your bank account.

There you have it. Confusing, isn't it? That's why plug-in solutions like CDStreet or CCNow are so attractive. You don't have to worry about payment gateways, authentication processes, or buying shopping cart systems. You simply plug in a bit of HTML into your web page and you're done. However, once you start doing a lot of business, merchant accounts can save you a lot of money. It's a real headache to set up, but once set up, you can rest easy knowing money is being automatically deposited into your account while you sleep.

Alternatives to Taking Credit Cards

If you decide you cannot or do not want to take credit cards, there are other alternatives (**NOTE:** If you do NOT take credit cards online you WILL lose sales!). One of the biggest reasons customers use credit cards online is for convenience. So an alternative to taking credit cards is to find another convenient way for your customer to order your product. One alternative that works fairly well is to make your CD available to your customers without them having to pay up front. Tell your web visitors that you will happily send them your CD or other merchandise free of charge to try in their home for a set period of time. All they need to do is send you their mailing address, their e-mail address, and their phone number and you'll send them your merchandise. When a customer sends you his or her address information, send them your CD or other merchandise and include an invoice. The customer then has the option to pay for your merchandise at their convenience or return the product if they are unsatisfied. This makes it easy for your customer to pay, and it gives them a way out in case they take a chance on your music and decide they don't like it. Of course, one disadvantage to this alternative is that you do occasionally have problems collecting from customers. When I tried this option, I found that I received about a 70% payment rate. This is why if you choose this option, it's crucial you get the customer's e-mail address and phone number so you can follow up with them. Nonetheless, this is one way to get your music out there and most people do pay eventually. See *Proven Strategies for Selling Your Music* for more details on this 'try before you buy' option.

Online Checks - Dead on Arrival

A while back I experimented with an online check acceptance program by a company called ValidPay (http://www.validpay.com). ValidPay.com offers a program called 'ValidCheck' which allows you to accept check payments from your customers right over the Internet. You would think this would be a great alternative for customers who either do not have a credit card or simply prefer not to use one. I thought I'd give it a try, after all, I figured, the more payment options I give my customers, the better! The setup turned out to be very easy, and the cost, a $4.95 monthly fee (with a $29.95 setup), was quite manageable. Once set up, the only additional payment necessary to ValidPay was a .99¢ per transaction fee. That's a bit high, especially for selling low-cost items, but if it meant one more sale, I deemed it acceptable.

I used ValidCheck for nearly six months. The verdict? Not a single sale. Every one of my sales still came either via credit card or mail order. I had to conclude that my visitors simply didn't care to pay by online check. Either the process was too bothersome, or people just find credit cards an easier way to go.

Save your money. Stick with credit cards. It works.

What About PayPal?

PayPal is an Internet service that allows registered users to transfer money to and from bank accounts via cyberspace. It's very popular, especially for users of online auctions like eBay.com. What about making use of PayPal as a shopping cart solution? A couple of readers have asked me this very question, so here's my take on it.

Like CCNow and CDStreet, PayPal offers a plug-in shopping cart solution for your web site. Once you've added the provided HTML to your web page, customers can click a button to purchase your product. There are no setup or monthly fees, and PayPal's transaction fee, which is only 2.9% + .30 cents/transaction, makes PayPal a *very affordable* and attractive solution. When a customer makes a purchase, the money is automatically deposited into your bank account. You don't have to wait for a check.

There are two reasons PayPal doesn't get my highest endorsement. The first is that in order to purchase a product, customers have to first create a PayPal account. Though the process of creating an account is integrated fairly well into PayPal's shopping cart system, it's still another step the user has to take before actually handing you their money. The account creation aspect of the cart may also be confusing for some first-time buyers. It's really important not to confuse your buyers!

The second reason I waver on PayPal is due to reputation and trust issues. A few people who regularly shop on eBay have shared with me that they are actually *afraid* to use PayPal due to data security issues. In other words, they are afraid their personal information may not be secure. As recently as October 28th, 2002, I found an article in PC World called "PayPal Users Targeted by E-Mail Scam—Again" (See http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,106412,00.asp) . In this case, the issue isn't PayPal's fault, but the point I'm making is that PayPal has an image problem with some of the general public. Thus, if you use PayPal and PayPal alone for your cart system, your customers may hesitate to order because, whether their reason is legitimate or not, they simply don't trust the system. PayPal was just recently acquired by eBay, so, perhaps over time and under new management this perception of insecure data will fade.

PayPal *does* offer a good shopping cart solution for those without merchant accounts, and the low fees do make it worth some consideration. Just keep in mind the factors above. You may want to experiment with PayPal's solution to see how it works for your own visitors. I have not pursued it myself.

Need Recurring Billing?

Do you need the ability to bill customers automatically on a monthly or yearly basis? If you are selling a subscription service of some kind, this is a feature you may wish to research. Web-based billing companies offering this feature include Verotel (http://www.verotel.com), 2CheckOut.com (http://www.2checkout.com), and WebSiteBilling.com (http://www.websitebilling.com). Of these three services, the one I am most familiar with is Verotel. I can vouch for them in that they do make payments on time.

Optimizing Your Site for Search Engines - A Step-By-Step Guide

Preparing Your Web Site for Search Engine Registration

If you've spent any time at all investigating how to promote your web site online, you already know the emphasis the Internet-world-at-large puts on registering your site with the Internet search engines. Based on the volume of debate on the subject, you would think registering your site and getting good search engine positioning is the be-all-and-end-all of web site marketing. There's a lot of hype out there! So, what's the real story?

Registering your web site with the major search engines is indeed an important part of your marketing strategy. However, search engine registration is but *one small part* of your effort. The success of your site does NOT rely entirely upon search engine registration. Let's get that myth out of the way! Some people spend hours a week trying to improve their search engine positioning. It's a waste of time. If you spend all your time obsessing over your search engine position, you won't get any other work done!

The fact is, if you prepare your web page correctly for search engine submission the first time, you can relax about it. You won't have to worry about whether your site is #1 or #20 on the list. Your site, if managed correctly, will be a constantly changing, growing site. You'll have numerous opportunities to submit new pages and update the search engines with new content and information. As time goes on, more people will find you, and if your web site is a quality site that serves its intended audience well, you'll find success on the search engines eventually comes around. That success does, however, require time and patience.

In this chapter, I will explain how search engines work, offer tips for preparing your web site for registration, and show you how to optimize each individual web page to maximize your potential rankings. By 'optimize,' I simply mean designing your web pages in such a way as to improve your chances of being found when someone searches the Internet for a topic relevant to your web site. The methods I will teach you are the same simple, easy to employ strategies I myself use at MusicBizAcademy.com and my other project sites.

Designing Pages Around Keywords and Phrases

Before I can go into any depth about how to optimize your web site for the search engines, it's important that you understand the nature of strategic *keywords* and *key phrases*. These keywords and phrases are going to be the 'axis' around which each of your individual web pages revolve. Your keywords, and how you integrate them into your page content, are going to be the heart of your web site as far as the search engines are concerned.

So, what are keywords? Well, what words or phrases do you think people will type in a search engine that *should* result in their finding your web page? Those words, whatever they are, are your strategic keywords. If, for example, you think someone should find your web site when they search the Internet for "Flamenco music," then that's one of your key phrases. Knowing this, take a few moments and think of as many words or complete phrases you can that relate to your web site. Really focus on building *key phrases*, that is, the use of two or more words together. Focusing on entire phrases, rather than just single words, will improve your chances of being found on the Internet. Why? Look at it this way: if you use the Google search engine (http://www.google.com) to search for the word "music," Google returns approximately 7 million results. If you search more specifically for "piano music," Google returns a list of 2.6 million sites. Search even more specifi-

cally for "jazz piano music" and Google returns just 1 million sites. As you can see, the more *specific* you get with your keyword phrases, the more likely you are to be found by someone searching the Internet using that particular phrase. The more specific your phrase, the more you narrow down your competition.

If you have difficulty thinking up key phrases, try making use of the Overture Suggestion Tool at http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/ . Using this tool, you can input any keyword or phrase, submit, and then see how many instances of that keyword or phrase have been searched for at Overture.com within the last month. For example, type in the word "guitar" and you'll see a list that looks something like this:

627388 guitar tablature
262676 guitar
205720 bass guitar
125117 guitar chord
52805 guitar lesson
47326 guitar center
30649 electric guitar
24993 guitar music
23914 gibson guitar
and so on....

Not only can this tool provide you with more ideas for individual words or phrases, it also shows you what phrases people are actually using to search the Internet. What this tool allows you to do is compare your potential keywords to determine which keywords are really the most likely to bring targeted traffic to your web site. If the audience you want to target are guitar players, and you had to choose just one key phrase to target them, would you use "guitar tablature" or "guitar music" as a keyword phrase? With this tool, the choice is obvious. There's no guesswork involved. As you can see, many more people search for "guitar tablature" than "guitar music." Information like this can really come in handy when you are researching who your audience is and how to best target them. Once you have completed your list of keywords and phrases, organize them, listing the most powerful and most relevant keywords and phrases first.

Now that you have a basic understanding of keywords and phrases, let's talk about how search engines work...

Creepy-Crawlies: Bait for the Spider

When you register your web page with a search engine (I will show you how to do this in the next chapter), the engine sends what is commonly referred to as a spider, a crawler, or a robot to index your web site. This spider examines the text and links it finds within your pages and uses that *content* to determine what your web site is really all about. Everything the spider finds as it travels through your site gets added to the search engine *index*, which is essentially a huge database that contains every page it finds. Sometimes there is a lag time between the crawling and the actual indexing, which is why, in some cases, it can take several weeks before your site is included in search engine listings.

The key to optimizing your web site for crawling search engines is to create web pages that are spider-friendly. You, in essence, want to help the spider *learn* what your web site is about. To do this, you design your site in such a way as to *impress upon* the spider the *content* you want it to notice. This all sounds very science-fiction doesn't it? While I'm giving you the impression the spider is more intelligent than it really is, I'm doing so to make a point. Web page content matters, and to some degree your task is to arrange your web site in such a way that the spider gets the food it's looking for while at the same time, you feed it content that will

most benefit your search engine positioning. So, how do you do that? That's where your keywords and phrases begin to come into play.

There are three things that really matter to crawling search engines in deciding how they rank your web site in their listings: your page title, your page relevancy, and your page popularity. I'll begin by discussing your page title.

Your Page Title Says it All...

The single most powerful tool you have to draw traffic to your web site via the search engines is your web page title. Your title, which appears in the top bar of your web browser, is also the text that displays in the search engine results. It's the text the searcher will click on to go directly from the search results page to your web site home page.

Your web page title has more influence over your search engine listing (and whether someone actually clicks on it) than any other single aspect of your site. Therefore, placing your strategic keywords in your title is of utmost importance. Not only because you need to create a page title that says to someone, "click on me," but because when someone searches the Internet for a particular phrase, pages that contain that *exact* phrase in the page title will, in most cases, be displayed above other pages which do not have the same exact phrase in the title.

Let me give you an example. Using Google (http://www.google.com), if you search the Internet for "lemon meringue pie," the top returning results will, in most cases, contain that exact phrase. Thereafter, sites containing "lemon pie" or just "lemon meringue" in the title are listed, and after that sites containing just "lemon" or "meringue" or "pie" or variations on those words are listed. By the way, as of this writing, Google lists 25,800 web sites containing those terms. Just in case you were wondering.

The point is, choose your page title very carefully. Word the title of your index page in such a way that you make use of your most powerful keywords and/or phrases so that search engines find your exact match. At the same time, keep in mind people are reading your page title and using that to determine whether or not your link is worth the effort of clicking on. So you can't just squeeze every possible keyword combination into that one, single page title. If you do, the title won't make a whole lot of sense to the searcher! You may find it helpful to think of your page title as a one-line ad. Your task is to make that ad stand out when listed on a page with 19 other ads.

Finally, as you ponder all of this, remember that as you build and grow your web site, you're going to be adding more and more pages. Each of those individual pages represents another opportunity to be included in the search engine index. So, as you move forward designing and organizing your web site, build your pages around variations on your keywords and phrases. This creates diversity within your web site, and creates a variety of pages that can each target your potential customers in slightly different ways. I'll be talking a bit more about this in the chapter, *Targeting Your Customers to the Max*.

Creating a Page Title: If you don't know how to give your web page a title, simply follow these steps: First, open your HTML document in a text editor. In the <HEAD> portion of the document (between the two HEAD indicators), use this tag: <TITLE>My Web Page Title</TITLE> Put it on a line by itself, then save your text file as an *.html document. When you view this page in a browser, the title will appear at the top in the browser title bar.

NOTE: I need to emphasize that your page title will be of absolutely no benefit to you if it doesn't reflect your actual web page content. Remember, the spider is looking at more than just your page title -- it's examining the whole of your page content. So whatever keywords or phrases you use in your page title, those same topics,

whatever they are, should be addressed within that page. In short, for best results your page title should be a one line, short description of what that page actually contains.

Your Relevancy Rating

Having covered your web page title, I'll now talk about a second important factor a search engine uses to determine how to position your web site in its listings: relevancy. Once the page title has been established, search engines tend to sort pages based on the density of keywords or key phrases within a document. In other words, a calculation is made to determine the *frequency* of your particular key phrase within a page when compared to all the other text around it. The resulting calculation is translated into a relevancy rating, which goes to determine how relevant your web site is to a particular phrase searched for.

There are a number of factors that enter into calculating your *relevancy*. When your web page is indexed, search engines tend to give more importance to text that appears high in that page, usually in the first paragraph or so. So, to improve your relevancy rating for a set of keywords or phrases, include as many of them as is reasonable to do so in the opening paragraph describing your web site. In other words, put together a good, basic description of your web site, include as many keywords and phrases as you can, and place that description near the top of your web page. As with the page title, remember to make sure your description reads naturally. Don't stuff the top of your page with keywords and phrases just for the sake of stuffing it to impress the crawlers! The resulting concoction may be altogether unnatural sounding! Use your keywords and phrases, but work them into a natural sounding reading. One reason for this, aside from the obvious (it reads well to a human being), is that some search engines (like Google) use random text from your web site to display a site description on their results page. So, as with the page title, you want a description that's going to appeal to human readers.

NOTE: If you are making use of tables in your page design, include your description text and strategic keywords within the top, upper-left-most cell of your table. Search engine spiders read table text before the remainder of the page.

Another way to improve your relevancy rating is to keep your web pages relatively short. The longer your page goes on and on with endless text, the less each of your keywords or phrases will stand out. Why? Because the more text you have, the less relevant each key phrase becomes for that page. Have you ever noticed how many web sites give you just a bit of information on one page, then make you click "next" to go to page 2, page 3 and so on? Ever wonder why they don't just put it all on one page? There are three primary reasons for this: First, the more your visitor has to scroll down to read your page, the more likely they are to leave. People easily get overwhelmed with too much information. Secondly, the more pages used, the more banner impressions are generated for advertising revenue (I'll discuss this more later). Finally, and in this context, shorter pages generally mean a higher relevancy rating.

By the way, this relevancy issue also means you need to have actual HTML text on your page. I often run into web pages made up entirely of graphic images or Flash content. The problem with this design is that if your page is made up entirely of graphic images or Macromedia Flash, you'll get zip for a relevancy rating. You need text for the spiders to feed on. They can't read your images or your Flash content. So, whenever possible, use text. Your human visitors will appreciate that as well. As I mentioned in the chapter on web design, Flash is cool looking, but it doesn't sell product. Let me say that again. Flash is cool looking, but it doesn't sell product!

ANOTHER NOTE: Do you make use of frames in your web site design? If so, then be aware that frames have a drastic effect on a search engine's ability to spider your site. Many search engine spiders have difficulty coping with frames and will generally ignore text contained within them.

YET ANOTHER NOTE: Again, don't stack your page content with *extra* keywords and phrases for the explicit purpose of getting a higher relevancy ranking with the search engine! Use common sense. The above suggestions are made to help you strategically place your content on your web pages, not to imply you should fill your pages with useless clutter!

Just a Popularity Contest?

Finally, a *big* factor that determines search engine ranking is web site popularity. Web sites that are frequently linked to from other web sites are considered to be *higher quality* web sites than web sites no one is linking to. Why? Because, a search engine reasons, if 'Bill's Web Site' has more people linking to it than 'Ted's Web Site' does, then the probability is that Bill's web site contains more useful content that visitors want. So, when someone searches for your keyword phrase, the top sites returned will not only contain the exact phrase in the page title and have relevant content, they will also have many other web sites linking to them.

This logic, while it makes sense, does make it very difficult for brand new web sites, no matter how good they are, to compete with web sites that already have a well-established web presence. This doesn't seem very fair, does it? I can completely understand this sentiment. There are a number of web sites ranked higher than The Music Biz Academy when you search the web for "music business" that, in my opinion, really shouldn't be ranked higher. Not only is their content, in some cases, lacking, but some of them are plain ugly to look at! The fact is, however, they've been on the web longer, and so they enjoy more links, and thus higher rankings.

So how do you overcome this popularity contest to improve your web site ranking in the search engines? There are several ways, most of which I will discuss in detail later in the book. However, as not to leave you hanging, these ways include, but are not limited to:

1) Building reciprocal links with *quality* web sites: Find the web sites that already rank high in the search engines when searching on your keywords and phrases, then contact the webmaster and inquire if they will exchange links with you. The higher quality the web site is that links to you, the more this link will help you in your quest for a higher position in the search engine results. Why? Because search engines count not only *how many* other sites link to you, but *how popular* the sites are that link to you. In other words, if 10 *quality* web sites link to you, it will do you more good than if 50 *poor quality* web sites link to you.

2) Paid search engine exposure: You have the option of paying for exposure on the search engines using pay-per-click advertising. It's not inexpensive, but it works. I cover pay-per-click engines in more detail in the next chapter.

3) Get creative with your key phrases: Some keywords and phrases are unique enough that searches on those phrases return significantly fewer results, meaning it's much easier for you to rank well when you use those phrases. This would be one case where going for the most commonly searched for key phrase may not do you as much good as targeting a lesser searched for, but more unique, key phrase. This really comes down to knowing and understanding your target audience to determine what it is they are specifically searching for on the Internet. Again, I will be addressing the topic of *targeting your audience* in more detail later in this book.

4) Create quality content: This seems obvious, but if you create a quality web site with information people want, they will link to you from their own web sites. That will, over time, improve your popularity ranking.

Most 'crawling' search engines lean heavily on link popularity to determine their search results. While your page title is the most important thing to use to ensure you get listed for a particular phrase, ultimately, the highest ranked sites are going to be the most popular sites. Please do not get discouraged about this! As I mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter (read it again if you need to), the search engines are *just one way* to bring visitors to your web site. You must keep this in mind! There are *many* other ways to bring

targeted traffic to your web site, so don't fret too much about your search engine positioning. Using the marketing methods I will address in this book, you will be able to both improve your web site popularity (by creating a buzz about it) and as a result, your search engine ranking. Don't sweat the search engines. There's more to the Internet than getting listed in Yahoo!

Helping Spiders!

I want to summarize some general things you can do to help search engine spiders crawl your web site. Here's how to feed a spider well:

1) Create a 'site map' page that links to all of the major pages within your web site. Using a text link from your home page, link to this site map. That makes it easy for the spider to crawl the pages you feel are most important.

2) Use text links throughout your web site and link often between important pages.

3) Keep your descriptive text high in the page and easily accessible.

Killing Spiders!

Here are a few things that kill spiders, stop them cold dead, or severely handicap their ability to crawl your web site. You'll want to avoid...

1) The use of Flash content only (especially on the all-important home page), providing no text links to follow.

2) The use of graphical content only, providing no text links to follow.

3) The use of frames.

4) The use of Dynamic pages that use CGI for page delivery. Most spiders can't read this information. The use of SSI, however, is fine.

5) The use of symbols in your URLs, such as the '?,' which is often used as a command parameter. Once a spider sees the '?' symbol in a web address, they'll go no further.

The above information will help you organize your web pages in such a way that you can maximize your potential for most any crawling search engine. However, I have a few other tips that might (and I repeat, *might*), in certain circumstances, help improve your positioning. I'll start with everyone's favorite 'magic bullet': meta tags.

Meta Tags: Much Ado About Pretty Much Nothing

At one time, the proper use of meta tags in your web page was considered to be the 'secret' of search engine optimization. Many people still use them today to try to influence rankings. While it's true that meta tags once had great influence on search engine positioning, today meta tags aren't that important at all (See *Death of a Meta Tag* at http://www.searchenginewatch.com/sereport/02/10-meta.html). In fact, none of the major search engines, with the exception of Inktomi, even look at meta tags. Still, a few minor search engines do look to them, particularly your 'description' tag, to find key information about your site. Therefore, it's useful to have a good understanding of how to best make use of them.

What are meta tags, you ask? If you view the HTML of your web page in a text editor, you should see your meta tags at the very top, in the <HEAD> section of your document (commonly called the page header). Your web page header will look something like this:

<HEAD>

<TITLE>My Web Page</TITLE>

<META Name="description" Content="Write a web site description here">
<META Name="keywords" Content="Insert your keywords and key phrases here">

</HEAD>

While you may see other tags listed there, the *description* and *keyword* tags are the only two you really care about. It is possible that by default, you have no meta tags listed. If this is the case, simply add them like you see in the example above. Make sure you place them between the two <HEAD> tags. Once this is done, save your text file as an *.html or *.htm document (either extension will work).

NOTE: In case you are wondering, the items in your page header do not display in the web browser. Only items within the <BODY> section of your HTML document (below your page header) are displayed in a browser.

Write a good description of your web page using 150 characters or less (including spaces) and insert this into your *description* meta tag. This description might be the same exact description you place high in your web page to help create relevancy, as discussed earlier. As you did with that description, include as many of your keywords and key phrases as possible. Again, don't just stuff your description with keywords for the sake of stuffing it with keywords (I'm really beating this horse dead!). Some search engines make reference to this description tag when listing your web site in their search results. So use your keywords and phrases in a logical way, resulting in a description that, though it uses your keywords and phrases, also makes sense and appeals to the reader.

Now take your top 8 or 10 keywords or phrases and include them in your *keyword* meta tag. Here's an example a Flamenco guitarist might use:

<META Name="keywords" Content="flamenco, spanish music, flamenco guitar, latin music, flamenco dance, ottmar liebert, spanish guitar, dance music, jesse cook">

Use all lower case and don't repeat your keywords or phrases. There is some debate as to whether using commas to separate your key phrases makes any difference to search engine crawlers. Some prefer to simply string all the text together, leaving out the commas. I have no opinion on this issue. Personally, I use commas. It just seems more organized.

NOTE: It's very important that the keywords or phrases you use in your meta tags actually exist within the content of your page. For example: if you use "guitar tablature" as a keyword phrase to attract guitarists, but that phrase does not exist anywhere else in your page (or there isn't any guitar tablature, period), then the search engine spider will consider your page irrelevant to that keyword phrase. You must keep your keywords relevant to the actual content within your page!

A Keyword to the Wise

Avoid using keywords in your meta tags that are vague or open-ended. Earlier, I illustrated how ineffective using the keyword "music" alone would be. The term is so generic that it would be extremely unlikely that anyone would find your web site when performing a search for that single word. Why even bother using that as a keyword? Instead, focus on more unique keywords or phrases that are more *specifically* representative of who you are. Also, don't get cute by using keywords that have nothing to do with your web site just because they are commonly searched for. What good would it do you to use "Pamela Anderson Lee" as a keyword phrase for your music site? Sure, her name is one of the most searched for on the Net, but do you really want to target an audience that's in search of Pamela? Probably not! (unless Pamela Anderson Lee is the name of your band - there's a thought!) Even if such a keyword increased your traffic by a few hits a month, that's not the way to target customers who are likely to buy your products! It's not the quantity of traffic that's important, it's the *quality*. Again, we'll discuss the topic of targeting your audience in more detail in the upcoming chapter *Targeting Your Customers to the Max!*

The 'Spam'-ish Inquisition

Speaking of getting cute with keywords, not only should you avoid using unrelated words or phrases in your tags, you should avoid the *overuse* of the same keywords. Repeating the same words over and over in your meta tags is considered to be 'spam.' Anything you do that is designed to artificially pump up your keyword relevancy is spam. Sites deliberately stuffing their meta tags (or their page content) with the same keywords repeated over and over usually end up getting penalized in their ranking, and may even be dropped entirely from the search engine index. If you think you have found some unique way to trick the search engines into giving you a better listing, think again. By trying to outsmart the search engines, you may end up being your own worst enemy! Play it safe, use sensible keywords and phrases, and place them logically and strategically in your page without overdoing it. There's a careful balance to maintain. If your goal is to increase your search engine ranking, do so by growing and improving your page content, building reciprocal links, and creating a web site of value for your target audience.

More Meta Tag Tips

Here are a few more tips for creating keyword meta tags:

1) Add the letter 's' to the end of every word where appropriate (or add the plural of the word to the list in the case of words like cactus/cacti). For example, if you use the phrase "guitar tab" change that to "guitar tabs." A search for "tab" will also find your keyword "tabs," whereas the opposite is not true.

2) Some search engines consider capitalized and lower case words to be two different words. For example, MP3 and mp3. If you think a particular keyword or phrase is likely to be typed both ways during a search, you might include both variants in your meta tags. Keep in mind, however, that when most people use search engines they type using all lower case.

3) Don't forget misspellings. If one of your keywords has a common misspelling as a variant, use it. For example, is it "Sarah McLachlan" or "Sarah MacLachlan?" Do you see the variant? Chances are, both are searched for.

4) Geographical location is important. If you're a band in Athens, Georgia, indicate that in your meta tag, description and content. If a particular venue is looking for a local band or artist, they may include the city name in their search. For example, "lounge singers in boston."

Other Somewhat Useful Tips

Here are a few other ideas for improving your web site's relevancy with search engines. These tips *might* help with a few crawling search engines, and they might not. I put them here for your consideration as you go about building your web site.

Location, Location, Location

If you can use a strategic keyword or phrase in your web site address, you can, to some degree, use this to increase your relevancy within your actual HMTL. For example, if you have a site designed around the topic of Flamenco music, including the word "flamenco" in the web site address would be a logical thing to do. For example: http://www.flamencomusic.com.

Now, let me show you how you can build on that. Let's say John's home page is located at http://www.flamencomusic.com. He has several articles he's written on Flamenco guitar technique and has created web pages for each of these articles. Where should John put those articles on his site to create maximum impact with the search engines? If I were consulting John on this, I would advise him to create a sub-directory within his site called "guitar," then one further called "technique." Now, if he has several articles on technique, these should be placed in the http://www.flamencomusic.com/guitar/technique/ directory.

Now, from his home page, he lists several of these articles and links directly to them. He now has links pointing to:

http://www.flamencomusic.com/guitar/technique/tromolo.htm
http://www.flamencomusic.com/guitar/technique/legatos.htm
http://www.flamencomusic.com/guitar/technique/tempestad.htm
and so on...

Now, if John views the HTML of his home page, he will see these URL links complete with some powerful keywords. When the search engine spider comes along to index John's Flamenco page, this URL text is indexed as well, and as a result, may boost the relevancy of John's Flamenco music site when someone searches for information on specific Flamenco guitar styles.

The point? If you're going to have links to other pages within your site, you might as well design your directory structure in such as way as to include your strategic keywords.

Tagging Your Images

If you make use of graphic images on your web site, you can use those, to some extent, to create more text for the search engine spider to feed on. How? By taking advantage of the ALT command for your images. The purpose of this command is to put text in place of images in the event your images don't load. The command was used frequently in the early days of the Internet for text-only web browsers.

Here's an example of a standard HTML graphic image reference:

<IMG SRC="flamenco_sampler.gif" HEIGHT=142 WIDTH=171>

Now, here's an example that employs the ALT command:

<IMG SRC="flamenco_sampler.gif" ALT="Free Flamenco Music Sampler!" HEIGHT=142 WIDTH=171>

The addition of the ALT command creates a text description for your logo or graphic. To see this effect on any web page, move your mouse pointer over the logo and if you see a text area float over the logo or graphic, you know the ALT command is in use. A few search engines will read that ALT information as it gathers information about the site.

Link Text: Get Specific

It has been theorized that when determining relevance, some search engines lend additional weight to text that is hyperlinked on your web site. In other words, text you link may be seen as more relevant than text you do not. For example, let's say you have links to your articles on Flamenco guitar styles from your home page. Instead of using text like this...

"For some great articles on different Flamenco guitar styles, click here"

and then linking the "click here" text, do this...

"Check out our articles on Flamenco guitar styles."

and link the words "Flamenco guitar styles"

Some in the search engine industry speculate that this will create more relevancy for the phrase "Flamenco guitar styles" within that page. If this is true, you could see why you'd want more weight placed on the words "Flamenco guitar styles" than on "click here."

The 'Exclusion' Clause

There may be an occasion when you do NOT want a web page indexed by a search engine. If you want to exclude a page from a search engine, just include the following meta tag:

<META Name="robots" Content="noindex">

Put that line between the <HEAD> tags of any page you do NOT want indexed and the spider will leave the page alone.

Humans and Hybrids...

I have used this chapter to help you fine tune your web site primarily for search engine spiders and crawlers. This is for good reason, as crawlers are the most common type of search engine out there. There are two other types of search engines to be aware of, however. These include what some experts refer to as 'Humans' and 'Hybrids'.

'Humans' are not really search engines, but directories powered by human editors. These include Yahoo's directory and the Open Directory Project. When you submit your web site to a search directory like Yahoo, you wait (and wait and wait), hoping that the editor receiving your submission will review it, like your web site, and include it in their listings. In a way, it works much like my own online directory for musicians at the Music Biz Academy (http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory). I receive tons of submissions from people and companies who want to be included in my directory. However, I am rather particular about those businesses I actually do include, so I pick and choose the ones I think offer the most value to my visitors. The same is true for human-powered directories.

42

There really is nothing you can do to influence human editors other than create a web site that contains useful information the editor will consider of value to the world-at-large. With human-powered directories, all you can do is submit your web site and hope. If you are eventually included in the directory, consider that to be a high compliment. If you are not included, it may mean you need to improve your content, or that your web site content is good, but not *unique* enough, or it may just mean the human editor was in a rather foul mood at that particular moment and took it out on you.

The third type of search tool to be aware of is what some refer to as a 'hybrid,' that is, a web search engine that combines results from both crawlers and human-powered editing. MSN is one example of a search engine that displays both kind of results. Since hybrids are a combination of 'crawler' and 'human', all the tips within this chapter apply.

Optimization Summary

The point of this chapter is really to help you design your web page with search engines in mind. Now that you know what kind of content search engines are looking for, you can build your site around that. To summarize:

1) Search engine optimization is just one small part of your music promotion strategy. Your success as a musician on the Internet does not rely on the search engines.

2) Design your web pages around the keywords and phrases that target the customer most likely to be interested in your product. Each page is another opportunity to catch the attention of a different customer using a slightly different phrase to search the Internet.

3) Design your site to *impress upon* the search engine spider the *content* you want it to notice. Web page content matters. Content is king.

4) The three things that matter most to crawling search engines are your page title, page relevancy, and page popularity.

5) Think of your web page title as a one-line ad for your web site. Use a page title that says "click me" to any potential customer viewing it on a search engine results page.

6) Create content around your key phrases to establish relevance. Write a web page description, containing the appropriate keywords and phrases, and place it high in the page.

7) Search the Internet for sites that rank high using your keywords and phrases, contact the webmaster for these sites, and offer to swap links. This will increase your popularity ranking.

8) Meta tags do not, in most cases, have any effect on rankings since the major search engines ignore them.

9) Do not stuff keywords and phrases unnaturally in a web page for the sole purpose of trying to artificially inflate your relevancy rate. Use keywords and phrases logically, skillfully and appropriately using common sense.

10) When all is said and done, what matters is *content*. Design a web site that offers something of value to your target audience, and not only will they return, but eventually others will begin to take notice.

There you have it. Now I'll show you how and where to submit your web site to the search engines...

Search Engine Registration -
Making the Most of Search Engine Chaos!

Search Engines: The Changing Landscape

If you haven't noticed, the entire search engine world has undergone drastic changes in the last year or two. These changes have sparked panic, controversy, speculation, and even some saying the end of the 'free Internet' is at hand. What's the real scoop? First of all, no one can predict the future of the Internet. All we can do is make our best guess based on what we know. So, to get a good handle on where the search engine world is going, we need to understand where it's been. In the interest of that, I'd like to begin this chapter by giving you a brief overview of recent events.

The End of 'Free' Search Submission

At one time submitting your web site to all the search engines was free. That began to change on March 3rd, 1999. On that day, the hugely popular Internet directory Yahoo began its $199 Express Submission Service. For $199, small businesses were guaranteed a review from the Yahoo staff within 7-10 days (this service now costs $299). That was the only way to 'guarantee' your web site submission to Yahoo would even be seen. At first, people reacted in disbelief. What? Pay to submit to a search engine? But, pay they did, and over a year later, LookSmart (who now provides search results for MSN Search, AltaVista, CNN.com and others) followed with their own $199 Express Submit service. Like an airborne virus, this trend quickly infected the search engine world. Today, as Internet companies struggle to survive in a shrinking advertising economy, more search engines have followed this model. It's difficult to find a search engine that does not charge for web site submission or placement in one way or another.

This fact has lead many within the industry to panic. What if the time comes when you can't submit your web site *anywhere* for free? Will small businesses die on the Internet? How can they afford to pay to gain the exposure they need to survive as a business? Will web gurus and hobbyists flee the Internet in droves? Will anyone want a web site anymore? Will the Internet become a huge, corporate-run monster?

What does all this mean? It simply means that while optimizing your web site for the search engines remains a very important part of your marketing strategy, the time *might* come in the future when free submission is a thing of the past. If that should happen, then yes, it's going to be more difficult for small businesses or Internet hobbyists to make a dent in the emerging corporate Internet world. But quite honestly, I don't think it's *that* big of a deal for you, as a musician. There is hope for the future.

First of all, search engines depend heavily on web crawling technologies to find new content, and because of this, if you implement the marketing tips I discuss later in this book, search engine crawlers will eventually find you through indirect means as they come across links to your web site from other sites. This means that you do not *necessarily* have to submit your web pages for them to be listed. The search engine spiders will find you as they crawl the net. All you'd need to do is work on building your reciprocal links with other web sites, and that is something you should be doing anyway.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the *Google* search tool (http://www.google.com) rules the Internet right now. It's the most dominant search engine player in the game. Despite their powerful position, Google still lets you submit your web site to them for *free*. This is a very good thing, because as a result of its many business partnerships, Google's search results appear on numerous other search engines including Yahoo,

AOL, and Netscape. That means when you submit your web site to Google, you are indirectly submitting your site to Yahoo, AOL and Netscape too! Best of all, Google is run by a gang of renegade, anti-corporate software cowboys! Well, okay, they are not literally cowboys, but they do dance to a different drummer. The company is run and owned by its employees, not by advertising and marketing executives! For this very reason, I do not believe we will see Google go to a paid-only site submission model anytime soon.

Look at it this way. Google is the #1 search tool on the Net. Every other search tool out there is looking up to them, trying to figure out how to be the *next* Google. Even now, competitors are trying to out-google Google! As long as Google holds on to the success it currently enjoys, I don't see the end to free search engine submission in the near horizon. Now, should Yahoo buy out Google.... then you can worry! But, even if that should happen, even if a time should come in the future where you can no longer submit your web site to any major search engine for free, let me once again remind you: there's more to marketing your music on the Internet than getting listed on the search engines! A majority of the marketing strategies discussed in this book will have little to do with search engines, and more to do with properly targeting your audience. So, should the day come when it costs to submit to every single search engine, your career on the Net is not over. You still have opportunities for listing through indirect means.

Paid Submission vs. Paid Placement

At this point, I would like to cover pay-for-submission search engine services. There are two basic kinds:

Paid Submission: Search engines offering paid submission charge you to process a *request* to include your web site in its listings. You are NOT guaranteed to be listed. You are only guaranteed to be reviewed (and *possibly* included) in an 'express' time frame. Most of the major search engines offer some kind of paid submission program today. While most of those also offer free site submission, there is no guarantee your site will be reviewed. Paid submission guarantees your site will at least be considered.

Paid Placement: You want a high position on a search engine? Then pay up. The more you are willing to pay per click-through to your web site, the higher your site will be positioned in the listings. A few of these search engines also offer free listings, but all free listings come after any paid ones in the search results.

The most well-known paid placement service is Overture (http://www.overture.com). Overture allows you to bid for position in its listings much like an auction. The more you agree to pay each time someone clicks on your listing, the higher you are going to rank when someone searches for your keyword or phrase. So, if you want lots of clicks to your site, you'll have to be willing to pay more than your competitor to get the higher listing. It's a dog-eat-dog world!

Google runs a similar, but much friendlier service called AdWords. The major difference is that while Overture is pretty much exclusively paid placement, Google's main search results still give preference to its free listings. With AdWords, you aren't bidding for search positioning, but for advertisement spots. To see what I mean, simply visit Google (http://www.google.com) and perform a search. You'll see the AdWords 'sponsored links' on the right-hand side of the page.

You'll find more information on this topic at:

http://www.searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/paid.html
http://www.searchenginewatch.com/resources/paid-listings.html

Now that I've given you an overview of this crazy search engine world, let me show you how, where, and how *NOT* to submit your web site! First question....

Should You Pay for a Pro?

There are literally hundreds - even thousands - of search engines and directories on the Internet, and there are numerous search engine 'pros' who will be happy to submit your site to most all of them for you. Typically, these professional registration services offer to register your site with 1000 or more search engines and directories for a fee starting at around $35. Some companies, who offer 'deep' search engine submission may charge as much as $2000. You'd be crazy to pay that! While yes, there are thousands of search engines on the Internet, there are, in fact, only a few that really matter. 95% of all web search traffic goes through just a few search engines! You can do the submission work yourself in an hour or so.

If you would like help with site submission or even optimizing your web pages, I suggest contacting the Muse's Muse Internet Marketing Service at http://www.internet-marketing-mm.com/ . Jodi Krangle, the proprietor, specializes in music-related businesses and services. At least that way, you can get help from someone who knows our business! If you'd like to look into other search engine optimization pros, I've listed a few directories in the *Quick Resource Guide* in the back of the book.

'Easy' Search Engine Registration Tools

There are also tools available on the Internet which will allow you to submit your web site to many different search engines at once. The free submit tool at AddPro (http://www.addpro.com/submit30.htm) is one such example. The AddPro submission bot registers your site with 20 search engines simultaneously after you fill out and submit one single form. There are, however, a couple major drawbacks to auto-submit services like this one. First, since many of the major search engines now charge a fee to submit, services like AddPro are limited in what search engines they can actually submit your site to for free. In fact, most multi-engine submit services are, in my opinion, obsolete. AltaVista, for example, has put technology in place to prevent submission from such services! Secondly, based on my own past experience, I suspect the use of such services, whether via Internet (like AddPro), or via software (like WebPosition Gold), may actually result in a penalty to your ranking (see http://www.searchenginewatch.com/sereport/article.php/2162461 for an interesting report on this).

When all is said and done, it really does benefit you to submit your site to each of the major search engines manually and individually, so plan on setting aside the hour or two you need to complete the task. While submitting your web site may seem daunting if you have not done it before, in reality, it's quite easy. Just make sure your keywords, descriptions, page titles and content are all in order. Once that's done, you're ready to begin...

The Search Engines That Really Matter

As I mentioned previously, there are only a few search engines that will generate significant traffic to your web site. This is because nearly all searches performed on the Internet go through one of the top seven companies I list below. In addition to these, I have included any other search engine that has any kind of real presence on the Internet. The list below is based on both my own personal experience as well as recent figures from NetRatings (http://www.netratings.com/) and Jupiter Media Metrix (http://www.jmm.com/). As you check out each of these search engines, keep in mind that the fees (or lack of fees) I've listed may change at a moment's notice. So, what is listed as a free submission service now may not be in a month. These are listed in what I consider to be their order of importance.

Engine	URL	Submission Notes

1) Google   http://www.google.com

Submit via http://www.google.com/addurl.html . Google is the first place you should submit your site. Not only is Google's popularity still on the rise, but it has replaced Yahoo as the most used search tool on the Net (though the battle is still raging). With Google, you also get a lot of bang for your buck, as Google (as of this writing) provides 'web match' results for Yahoo and all the search results for AOL and Netscape (more info on these below). That means that if you get your page listed on Google, you also get listed on Yahoo, AOL and Netscape. It's a no brainer.

Cost: Free to submit, but also offers excellent AdWords paid placement options for maximum exposure.

2) Yahoo   http://www.yahoo.com/

You'll find information on how to suggest your site for Yahoo's directory at http://docs.yahoo.com/info/suggest/ Until recently, Yahoo was the dominant search engine player. Now it's #2. Yahoo's popularity has been damaged by its advertiser-driven format and the rise of Google. Yahoo isn't going down without a fight however, and it has spent the last few months trying to reinvent itself. See Google above, or Overture below, for more information on getting listed on Yahoo. **Important:** See the note regarding Inktomi below.

Cost: Free or $299/year recurring fee. Free option (only available for *some* web site categories) makes *no guarantee* Yahoo will consider your site. The $299 'express' option only guarantees *consideration*. Paying does NOT guarantee a listing. Also note that when you suggest your site to Yahoo, you are requesting inclusion in their *directory* results only, not the *web* results. Perform a search at Yahoo and note how 'sponsored' listings (from Overture), and 'web match' listings (provided by Google) actually seem to get priority treatment over their own directory listings.

3) MSN Search   http://www.msn.com/

Listings are provided by LookSmart (see below). MSN Search is very popular, and getting more so. It's questionable, however, whether inclusion is worth .15 cents per click.

Cost: $29 Setup fee, then .15 cents per click-through. See LookSmart below for more information.

4) AOL Search   http://search.aol.com/

As of this writing, AOL gets *all* of its search results from Google. This is a big one, as AOL Search services users of AOL's software. Get listed on Google, and you'll get the same listing here.

Cost: Free, via Google.

5) Overture   http://www.overture.com   Overture is a serious player in the search engine market, and their listings appear all over the Internet, including Infospace, MSN, AlltheWeb.com, AltaVista, Lycos, HotBot, and even Yahoo. However, these listings appear on these partner sites as 'sponsor matches,' and to appear in this list, your listing needs be one of the top matches returned for a keyword or phrase. Depending on the competition for your keyword or phrase, you may have to pay a pretty penny to achieve that.

Cost: Overture is strictly paid placement. You bid for your search engine rank. Minimum bid is .10 cents per click.

6) LookSmart   http://www.looksmart.com   Submit via http://looklistings.looksmart.com/ LookSmart provides the primary search results for MSN, and some listings for About.com, CNN.com, Netscape and others. LookSmart's paid placement system works much like Overture - you pick your keywords, then pay for click-throughs. Zeal (below) is a back-door means of getting non-commercial sites listed in LookSmart for free.

Cost: $29 Setup fee, then .15 cents per click-through.

7) All the Web http://www.alltheweb.com/   AlltheWeb.com's stock has been coming up lately, and it's a great search engine. Long a secret favorite of mine.

Cost: Free submission is still available, though listing is not guaranteed. Guaranteed listing is available through via Lycos (see below). That will cost you $35/year for your first URL.

8) Inktomi   http://www.inktomi.com/   As of this writing, Inktomi doesn't provide primary search results for *any* major search engine. However, it did just recently strike a deal with Yahoo that made big news. Some speculate that Inktomi's search results may soon replace Google to provide Yahoo's web results matches, which is why Inktomi ranks as #8 on my list. Watch out for this one. Inktomi provides the default search results for HotBot, and 'backup' results for MSN, LookSmart and Overture.

Cost: $39/year for the first URL, $25/year for each one after that. A good price if Yahoo integrates Inktomi results into its listings.

9) Teoma   http://www.teoma.com/   Submit via http://ask.ineedhits.com/. Some predict Teoma will be a major player in the future. Teoma is owned by Ask Jeeves (see below) and provides its primary search results.

Cost: $30 for first URL, $18 for each one after that. That pays for a one year listing.

10) **Lycos** http://www.lycos.com/ Lycos isn't near the traffic generator it used to be. Displays search results from AlltheWeb.com. Submit via http://insite.lycos.com/searchservices/

Cost: $35/year for your first URL, $15/year for each add'l.

11) **AltaVista** http://www.altavista.com/ Five years ago AltaVista was one of the top search engines on the Internet, but no more. Recently bought by Overture.

Cost: Free submission is available, but listing not guaranteed. 'Express Inclusion' available for $39 for the first URL.

12) **Ask Jeeves** http://www.ask.com Jeeves is fading in popularity, but still generates some traffic. Jeeves search results come from two sources; Google (sponsored results from Google's AdWords program) and Teoma (above) provides its primary search results. To suggest a site for Ask Jeeves 'answer' knowledgebase, send an e-mail with a brief description of your web site to url@askjeeves.com.

Cost: Free to suggest for answer engine. $20 for inclusion via Teoma.

13) **About.com** http://www.about.com About.com doesn't get the press it used to, but it is still a great place to be listed as it is one of the largest sites on the Internet. To submit your site, find the About.com directory you wish to be listed in, and then directly contact the 'guide' for that directory.

Cost: Free to suggest. Paid placement is available via Sprinks at https://www.sprinks.com/ .

14) **Netscape** http://search.netscape.com/ While Netscape doesn't have Internet Explorer's popularity, it's still a browser with a dedicated user base. Google provides the primary search results for Netscape's search tool.

Cost: Free, via Google. Don't bother with Netscape's 'submit to search engines' service. It's a waste of money.

15) **Zeal** http://www.zeal.com/ Zeal is included here for one reason: It's a back door to getting listed for free in LookSmart and MSN. However, to submit a site, you must join and answer a 'member quiz.' Only non-commercial sites accepted.

Cost: Free to suggest.

As you can see, most of these search engines either require payment or have paid options. How can you afford to pay for all these search engine listings? Actually, it's not as bad as you think. Even if you just submit your web site to Google, which you can do for free, you'll get exposure to *most* Internet users. According to a recent NetRatings report (January 2003), Google, Yahoo, Netscape, and AOL reach 81.2% of the total Internet audience. If you get your site listed on Google, your listing will be displayed on all those other search engines as well. I suggest you start there, and as you grow your income, you can later try out some of the paid options.

Testing and Resubmitting Your Keywords

Once you submit your main page to a search engine, it will, in most cases, send a spider to crawl and index the rest of your site. The spider will follow your text links to other web pages on your site and index them also. This means that you don't *necessarily* have to submit each of your pages separately to the search engines. Despite this, I do still recommend submitting your most important pages individually to those search engines that accept free submissions. By doing so, you will more quickly populate the search indexes with your content. Once your web site grows to 60, 80, or 100 pages, you'll find your stuff popping up all over when you do a search on your strategic keywords and phrases. More pages mean more visibility!

Once you are listed, you'll want to check back with the search engines periodically to ensure your pages stay listed. Even if you get a top 10 or 20 listing, you may find that in a month or two your site drops down a few slots. To make maintaining your positioning the easiest possible, simply remind yourself to reevaluate your content and resubmit a page any time you make major modifications to it. That should keep the spiders coming and keep your existing listings up to date.

Don't feel badly if you find getting a good listing on some of the search engines a frustrating task. It's not always easy. I have found that generally speaking, while you might be able to get a great listing on two or three of the major search engines, the others do not always give your site the listing you feel you deserve. This is due in great part to the fact that every search engine uses a slightly different methodology to rank search results. Don't worry too much about it. As I said at the beginning of the last chapter, search engine success takes time and patience. Sometimes you just need to focus on building a quality site, all the while keeping the optimization rules I mentioned in mind. Eventually, as you gain in popularity via the marketing strategies I'll get into shortly, your search engine ranking and visibility will increase.

Recommended Reading:

Here are some great places to do more research on search engines...

Search Engine Watch:	http://searchenginewatch.com/
RankWrite:	http://www.rankwrite.com
Search Engine Forums:	http://searchengineforums.com
Spider-Food:	http://sf.web-shorts.com/
Promoting Your Business Web Site:	http://www.webmarketingtoday.com/webmarket/promote.htm
PromotionWorld:	http://www.promotionworld.com/
Bruce Clay Tactics:	http://www.bruceclay.com/web_pt.htm

For search engine mastery, I *strongly* recommend you subscribe to RankWrite.com's free newsletter. It really is a must for anyone trying to keep up with the search engine world. I also highly recommend the SearchDay newsletter from SearchEngineWatch.com. Both of them are high on quality content, and low on advertising.

Targeting Your Customers to the Max!

Pick Your Target and Aim Carefully!

While it's important to properly design, prepare, and optimize your web site for the search engines, search engine placement is only the very beginning of your music marketing plan. If selling music on the Internet was as simple as submitting your site to the search engines, then you really wouldn't need this book! So, let's now dive into the all important topic of targeting your audience. The first audience you need to target is your existing fan base. As I will demonstrate shortly, your fans are going to play a big part in how you lay the groundwork for future marketing strategies.

If you're just starting out in the music business and feel like "I don't have a fan base," think again. You have family, friends, co-workers, classmates, former classmates, church members and neighbors all around you. If you sit down and start writing down the names of every person you've ever known in your life, you'll be very surprised how quickly that list grows without much effort. Doing *this very thing* is exactly how I started promoting my music way back in 1991. Don't underestimate the power of your friends, family, and immediate circle of acquaintances. You've heard of the fabled 'six degrees of separation.' Well, you really only need two of those six degrees to start building a pretty large mailing list.

Voices from the Past...

The Internet is a fantastic tool for finding old friends and acquaintances. One of the first things I recommend you do when building a mailing list is pull out your old high school and college yearbooks. Remember Joe? Brenda? Jimmy? I'll be you forgot about all those old chums of yours! Go through the class pictures and write down the names of anyone you think would be interested in your music career. Now you just need to find them!

There are a large number of resources on the Internet you can use to research old school pals. Most everyone knows about Classmates.com, which charges a fee to join, but there are other resources, many of which offer free registration. Here are a few places to begin your research:

Classmates.com:	http://www.classmates.com
Reunion.com:	http://www.reunion.com/
Alumni.net:	http://www.alumni.net
GradFinder:	http://www.gradfinder.com/
SchoolNews:	http://www.schoolnews.com/
ClassReunionSearch:	http://www.classreunionsearch.com/
CuriousCat Alumni:	http://www.curiouscat.net/alumni/

Incidentally, you should register with all of these places, as you never know when old friends may come looking for you. Usually, it doesn't cost anything at all (even at Classmates.com) to just add your profile and web site address.

Other places to search for people:

WhoWhere:	http://www.whowhere.lycos.com/
Bigfoot:	http://www.bigfoot.com/
AnyWho:	http://www.anywho.com/
Knowx:	http://www.knowx.com/

Since you now have your brand new web site ready for peer review, let's talk about....

Getting the Word Out!

Making Use of the Microphone....

If you are a performing musician, you have an advantage over musicians that don't regularly perform. That is, you have a captive audience to promote your music and web site to every time you play. Once you have center stage, take advantage of the limelight. Pick up that microphone and use it. Here are a few suggestions for promoting your web site at your gigs:

1) Are you ever at a loss for words when doing a sound check? Do you feel silly walking up to the mic and saying "test, test," to the annoyed, impatient look of the crowd? Make good use of that moment and integrate your web site address into your sound check. Say the address over and over again in creative ways while you're doing your sound check.

2) Hang a large banner over the stage with your web address in large, easy to read letters. If you can use black light and neon letters on your banner, all the better. It looks very cool, and everyone will see it.

3) Pass out business cards that contain your contact information and web site address. Business cards are dirt cheap advertising, so give them out like candy. On your business cards include a one-line catch-phrase about your act that sums it all up, and point it out to people when you hand them your card.

4) Rubber stamp the hands of all entering guests with your web site address. When they get home after the show, your web site address is still on their person. Yea, they'll wash it off, but they'll remember it the next morning.

5) Create flyers that emphasize all the great information available on your web site and pass them out at the show. On the flyer, include a coupon for CD discounts, merchandise discounts, or other special offers and incentives *only* redeemable from your web site.

6) Use your live show to promote contests for free merchandise, dinner dates with the band, cool band-name-branded gadgets, or other just crazy stuff. Get creative with your contests. Make the prize something unconventional to get the attention of your crowd. The contest entry form is, of course, available at your web site.

7) Offer sheet music, guitar tabs, or lyrics for your songs at your web site. Announce this from the stage. Fans who are musicians themselves will go zonkers for this.

8) Offer free MP3 downloads of new, unreleased material from your web site and announce from the stage that you are seeking fan feedback on those new songs.

9) Include an up-to-date performance schedule on your web site and at the end of the show let fans know they can go there for event times, dates, or to order tickets early. You might even offer discounts for tickets purchased via your web site by a certain date.

Let me encourage you to be *aggressive* about marketing your music and web site at concert events. Most artists are much too timid with promotion at gigs. They do their show, then afterward sit at a table and wait for people to come to them. This is the WRONG approach! If you've got CDs to sell, you should have someone working the audience, actively taking your CDs into the crowd and selling them while you are playing on stage. It's the same approach food vendors take at pro or semi-pro ball games. They don't wait for you to come to them, they go into the stands and bring their goodies to you! Take this same approach with your

audience and you'll find you have much better CD sales at events. I recommend you hire two or three 'agents,' people you pay a buck to for every CD they sell, then send them out to work the crowd. It's quick money for them, and quick sales for you.

Newsletters: Making Contact

Whether you are a performing musician or not, mailing out a printed newsletter to your fans twice a year is one more way to drive fans to your web site. Your newsletter is your key to getting inside the home of each of your fans on a semi-regular basis. While many suggest e-mail is a good, inexpensive substitute for postal mail, in reality, you should consider using both methods. E-mail is too easy to discard and people change e-mail addresses all the time. Not only that, but not everyone has a permanent e-mail address or Internet access, and for those fans, your newsletter may be your only means of keeping in touch. For the fans that *do* have Internet access, your newsletter is a great way to stir up curiosity about your web site.

Your newsletter should include much of the same information as your web site: band photos, a performance schedule, product reviews, news, articles, contests, song lyrics, merchandise info and, of course, contact and booking information. Newsletters have several benefits:

1) A newsletter keeps your act fresh in the minds of your fans.

2) A newsletter keeps your mailing list up-to-date. If you include the phrase "Return Service Requested" on your newsletter just below the return address, the post office will return undeliverable mail to you with the correct new address so you can update your mailing list.

3) A newsletter is a great source of information for those fans of yours who do not have Internet access.

Information and news about your web site should be a main topic of your newsletter. The objective of your newsletter, much like live performance, is to *drive your fans* to your web site where you can sell them your product. So, in your newsletter use some of the same methods to promote your web site that you do when performing. Announce contests, offer coupons, give away free stuff, whatever you can think of. The more your fans visit your web site, the more opportunities you will have to sell them your merchandise.

Before going further, I do want to briefly comment on the expense of maintaining a postal mailing list. At .37 cents a pop (not including printing costs), the cost of maintaining a postal mailing list does add up very quickly. If you manage your postal list wisely, however, you can keep your costs down while keeping your sales and responses up. Let me share with you how I manage my own personal mailing list.

First of all, you obviously don't want to send mailings to people who don't care about your music. Many people are one-time buyers, who purchased your CD on a whim at a show and are not likely to buy again. To deal with this, sort your mailing list into two categories; one for *active* customers and one for *inactive* customers. *Active* customers will receive all your mailings. These are the people who are big fans, who can't get enough of your music, who regularly come to your gigs, and who are seriously interested in what you are doing. These might include not only fans, but friends, family members and industry contacts. Your *inactive* customers will receive only selected mailings, usually postcards (less postage), mailed perhaps once a year to promote big blockbuster events that you are trying to pack out.

Breaking your postal mailing list down into active and inactive categories not only saves you postage, it keeps your information (and order form) readily available and in the hands of the people who are most likely to buy your music. If you haven't heard from a customer in a while, send them a friendly reminder postcard to ask them if they are still interested in receiving information about your act. On the postcard, include your web site

address, your e-mail address, phone number, and your mailing address and request they use one of those methods to let you know if they want to remain on your active list. Once you've sent the reminder, go ahead and put the customer on your inactive list, then give them another year or so to respond before dropping them from your mailing list entirely.

As for using e-mail lists to keep your fans informed, that is of utmost importance as well. In fact, one of your goals is to get everyone possible subscribed to your e-mail list. Promotion to fans starts by driving people to your web site with the goal of establishing a long-term, buy-and-sell relationship over the Internet. E-mail distribution is a strategy all its own and I will cover it in much more detail in the upcoming chapter, *Proven Strategies for Selling Your Music*. For the moment, I want to continue focusing on the topic of targeting your audience.

Having talked about using your shows and mailing list to drive traffic to your web site, I now want to talk about how to use your fans to actually help you figure out how to best promote your music online. When all is said and done, targeting your audience on the Internet really boils down to two important questions:

1) What is your target customer searching for on the Internet?
2) Where is your target customer hanging out on the Internet?

Knowing the answers to these two questions will help you drive targeted traffic to your web site. To find the answers to these and other questions, you need to...

Put Your Fans to Work!

Your fans are a *very* powerful asset for you. I can't stress this fact enough. As a performing musician, you may already have a large fan base. For every hundred fans you have, there's going to be at least one out there that lives and breathes your music. These are the people you want to enlist to help you. Just a few 'extreme' fans, as I call them, can go a long way in getting the word out about you and your web site. If you're not a performing musician, you should still have people around you who are supportive of your music, whether they be friends, family, or acquaintances. I only perform live a few times a year, but I still have 'roadies,' people who are very dedicated to my music, who show up at just about every gig and who I regularly enlist for help.

Will fans really help? Yes, your extreme fans will. People want to feel important to the people they love, and though it sounds a bit strange to say, your extreme fans do fall in love with you in a way. If you've been playing long enough, you've seen that starry-eyed look in people. It's very recognizable, and though it can, at times, be a bit disconcerting, you can put these fan emotions to work for you in a positive way. When you see that 'look' in a fan's eyes, ask them if they'd like to help you promote your music. If they say "yes," then you are on your way to creating your first 'street team,' as it's commonly referred to in the music industry.

One of your primary tasks at performances should actually be to seek out and find extreme fans for your street team. You are there, after all, to do more than just play your music! These people will usually jump at the chance to work for you, even on a volunteer basis. They'll pass out and post flyers for you, design web sites for you, sell CDs for you, help you set up and tear down equipment, and even spend the time and energy necessary to help you promote your music online.

Once you have created your own personal team of fans, arrange a special get together, a private 'by invitation only' dinner party for them. Host the party at your home, or if that's a bit too personal just invite them out for a Coke and pizza. Once you have everyone together, grab a pencil and notepad and start in with the questions:

"Who here spends much time surfing the Internet?"
"How much time a day, you think?"

"What do you like to do online?"
"What kinds of things do you search for on the Internet?"
"Who are your favorite artists and bands?"
"What hobbies do you have, and do you use your hobby on the Internet?"
"Where do you go online to talk about the music you like?"
"Are you involved in any chat rooms or discussion groups?"
"Where do you listen online to music most often?"
"Where do you go online when you want to find new music?"

The answers you receive to these questions will usually lead to even more questions. Listen carefully, keep the conversation going and **take detailed notes** on what your fans tell you. If there are a few in the group who seem reserved and shy, use your charming personality to bring them into the conversation. Let them know their feedback is important to you. You need input from every single person on your team. Knowing and understanding these people who love your music will help you know and understand the audience you want to target on the Internet. By getting to know the fans you *do* know, you'll better get to know the potential fans you *don't* know. That's the whole point of this exercise. Marketing firms pay tens of thousands of dollars to gather this kind of information for their clients. You can get it for the price of a dinner and a few drinks!

Once your private party is over, find a quiet place by yourself and analyze your notes on the comments your fans made. Find the commonality between your team members. What do all these people have in common? What hobbies, likes and dislikes? If you can find *common interests* between these extreme fans that you know enjoy your music, chances are others who share similar interests will dig your music as well. These interests, and this information you gather, will help you better target new customers on the Internet, which brings me straight to the next point....

Targeting New Customers - When You Do it Right, the Future Looks Bright!

Targeting your existing fan base is one thing, but bringing in brand new customers is an entirely different story. That fact begs the question, how can you bring new customers to your web site and generate more CD sales? After all, the number of musicians already established on the Internet is overwhelming. How can you compete with all of them? How can you ever hope to be heard when so many other web sites are out there demanding your customer's attention?

There are many different ways to find and target new customers on the Internet, but it's important to start by using the information you gather from your street team. Where do members of your team hang out on the Internet, and where are they going online to 'talk' about the music they love? These are the places you want to create a buzz about your music, *especially* if they are visiting Internet discussion groups or chat rooms dedicated to popular artists and bands.

Time for a Chat?

One of your first tasks when you're ready to begin targeting new customers is to send your street team into their favorite Internet newsgroups, chat rooms, and discussion groups to talk up your music. Since they visit these places fairly often, it's not like they are doing any extra work. They are just talking about your music, something they already love to do, and sharing it with their e-friends. The places they visit do not necessarily have to be music-related venues, either. Remember, you are targeting people who have common interests, and it's through this common connection that your street team can introduce your music to others.

This kind of thing is done all the time in the professional music biz. If you're in a chat room for the band Creed, for example, and you 'hear' two people chatting back and forth about this other amazing up-and-coming band,

do you think that's an accident? Well, it might be, but it might also be a couple of street team members for that "amazing" band (who might have a sound similar to Creed) trying to drum up some interest in a chat room where they have an audience receptive to their style of music. My best word-of-mouth comes from my street team. If they love to talk, let them talk, and help them direct that online, where they can casually mention the address of your web site wherever they happen to be hanging out.

'Group' Dynamics

You don't have to leave this buzz-generating promotion strictly in your team's hands, however. Join your team on the front lines, creating opportunities to promote your music in chat and group communities. Yahoo Groups (http://groups.yahoo.com) is the perfect place to start. Perform a search at Yahoo Groups for your strategic keywords and phrases and see what discussion lists come up as a result. Find and join those groups where your target audience is likely to hang out. When people post questions or comments on a topic in your area of expertise, respond and get involved in the discussion. Become the group expert, and every time you post a message or respond to someone, use a very specific signature. For example, here's mine:

David Nevue
Solo Piano 'Whisperings'
Music for a Quiet World
http://www.davidnevue.com
http://www.mp3.com/davidnevue

You don't even have to blatantly promote your music while you are posting message. If fact, I recommend you *don't* do that as people will dismiss you as an opportunist. You can 'talk' about yourself in these online communities without coming right out and saying anything about your music. Just answer questions, join in discussions, offer advice on the topic at hand and be available and involved. If you post messages frequently, using your signature, and if you are a pleasant person to talk to in the discussion group, people reading the messages will be curious about you and will eventually check out your web site. People might ask you questions about your music in the discussion group, and *then* you can talk about it all you want in the appropriate context. You'll make many new e-friends and web acquaintances, and if you are targeting your audience well, new fans.

In terms of Internet newsgroups, the same strategies apply. There are an ever-growing list of newsgroups for music-related and other topics. Find newsgroups where your target audience hangs out and get involved. To view newsgroups you will need a news reader. Both Netscape and Internet Explorer come with pre-installed readers you can use, as does Microsoft Outlook, which makes managing message threads much easier. To quickly search a large number of newsgroups, I recommend using the web-based Google Groups tool at http://groups.google.com/ . You can also just do some browsing there if you want to see what Internet newsgroups are all about. Access is totally free, and it's easy to navigate as well.

As for chat rooms, start with Yahoo's chat service at http://chat.yahoo.com and find chat rooms relating to topics you know your target audience is interested in. You will also find some very active chat rooms at the AOL community (http://www.aol.com/community/directory.html). Hang out in these rooms for awhile and look for opportunities to promote yourself. If nothing else, just listen in on conversations and get a feel for the kind of people hanging out in these rooms and the kinds of things they are looking for on the Internet. Lurking in chat rooms, newsgroups and discussion groups is a great way to get to know your target audience.

Targeting by Site

I would now like to introduce you to a marketing strategy I call "targeting by site." This online promotion strategy is what I would consider an advanced marketing technique, especially in terms of the time required to execute it. However, for the purpose of targeting new customers, targeting by site can be very effective.

To target by site, you really need to have a clear picture of who your target audience is and what it is they are searching for on the Internet. You need to be able to put yourself in the shoes of that potential fan out there who is just waiting to discover your music, and you need to know how to get their attention. They've never heard of you or your music, but what *have* they heard of? What are they looking for? What do they want and what do they *need*?

The idea behind targeting by site, is that you figure out what topic or subject your potential fan is looking for on the Internet and design a web site around that theme. This web site is *in addition* to your own personal band or artist home page. Let me make that clear. While aspects of this strategy can most certainly be used with your personal artist web site, you will have much more flexibility if you create an entirely new web site expressly for this purpose. You'll see why in a moment.

To illustrate this strategy, let me once again use the example of John, the Flamenco guitar player. John has a brand new Flamenco guitar CD that he wants to advertise to Flamenco music fans. The problem is, he needs to first get their attention. After a few meetings with his street team, John has a good idea what kinds of things Flamenco music fans are interested in. These include Flamenco guitar strumming techniques, gypsy music, Spanish guitar, and the history of Spanish guitar music styles. Some of his fans are also big fans of Jesse Cook and Ottmar Liebert, two well-known Flamenco-style artists. With all this in mind, John designs a web site with pages centered around the discussion of these topics. He calls this web site, dedicated entirely to Flamenco-related topics, www.flamencoworld.com. One by one, John finely tunes each individual page of his site with keywords and key phrases so they each target one particular topic. Once completed, John submits these pages individually to the search engines. Now John has a general topic web site specifically designed to appeal to the people who are *most likely* to be interested in his style of music.

So what happens when a potential new customer visits flamencoworld.com? All this topical stuff is great, but how does John call attention to his music? He does it by including a highly visible promotional ad for his CD on each individual page, one that links directly to a secondary page from which he pitches his Flamenco music CD. This ad might be as simple as one, highly-visible link, saying something to the effect of, "Flamenco Guitar Rocks! Listen to This Month's Featured CD," or, for more impact, John's 'ad' might be a short capsule review of the album designed to stir up interest in the reader. That review includes a link to a page with more details about the album, as well as free MP3 downloads, RealAudio samples, and of course a "buy" button.

Are you following the logic of this approach? Notice that, in this case, John didn't design a web site for the sole purpose of selling his CD or promoting his name. He created a web site that promoted Flamenco music as a whole to attract his target audience. Only then, when a visitor with an affinity to his particular style of music arrives, does he draw their attention to the CD he's selling. By using this technique, the artist gains more exposure and gains the additional benefit of having a much better chance of being found by the search engines. You see, John knows that his potential fan has never heard of him, but he also knows the kinds of things Flamenco music fans search for on the Internet. So, he uses that knowledge to his advantage.

Want another example? Who do fans say your act sounds like? Maybe your band has a real moody alternative grunge sound and everyone says you remind them of Alice in Chains, Nirvana or Pink Floyd. Rather than trying to sell your own name, which no one knows at this point, create a web site that targets fans of Alice in Chains, Nirvana or Pink Floyd and promote it. You can use their popularity to your benefit. Create fan pages for these bands, review their CDs, start a bulletin board or chat room service based on those bands. Now, on each of these pages, advertise your 'featured artist,' which is, of course, you. Are Nirvana fans looking for a

new musical buzz? Tell them how much they will love the new CD by this "great new band" you are featuring and provide sound files to listen to. Do you see how this works? The fan comes to your targeted site, checks out the featured artist he's never heard of, then, if you are successful with your sales pitch, takes a chance and buys your CD.

You can take this idea in all kinds of directions. Is your music soft like a lullaby? Perhaps you should create a site that targets moms who want help getting their babies to sleep through the night. Is your music groovy piano jazz? Maybe an 'online jazz bar' will bring in some curious customers. Brainstorm with your street team and see what kind of creative ideas you can come up with. Think of your targeting web site as a *product*. What kind of *product* does your target audience need? What are they searching for? Find that, use that, and design your targeted web site around that concept. Then you have something that will attract potential buyers who are already predispositioned to your style of music.

I ran across a perfect, real-life example of 'targeting by site' that I'd like to share with you to further illustrate this point. Check out http://www.press-release-writing.com/ . These guys have some great articles on how to write a press release, including "10 essential tips" to ensure your press release makes the news, sample press releases, a press release template and more. Guess what service they sell? Press release writing and distribution. Do you see what they've done? In creating these articles and getting them indexed in the search engines, they target the very customer they want to sell their services to. In fact, the way I found them was searching for easy-to-read articles on how to write a press release to add to my reference list in the next chapter. So, as you can see, by offering these free articles, these folks attract the attention of potential new clients and draw them into their web site where they can pitch their services.

Now you can see why I consider this target by site marketing strategy to be 'advanced.' It takes an awful lot of work. If you put this strategy to use, not only are you managing and maintaining your own, personal, artist home page, but now you're managing and maintaining a topic-related site (or sites) as well. From my own experience, however, I can tell you that this idea works. If you find the right *something* to promote online that your would-be-fan really wants, you have, by creating this targeted web site, built a bridge to a person who would have never heard of your music otherwise. Yes, it's time consuming, and yes, it's a lot of work, but it does sell product. That said, let me further develop this theme...

Newscasting - Riding the Wave of Pop Culture

You can also target new customers by doing something I call "newscasting." Keep a close eye on breaking news that would be of interest to potential fans. The news might involve popular music groups, entertainers, or any other information that would interest your target audience. As soon as big news breaks on the topic of interest, create a news page on your target site (or even your band/artist home site) with links, pictures, or whatever else you can find about the story. Optimize your page, including the page title, for the keyword or phrase that relates to the news item, then submit that page immediately to the search engines.

A very successful example of this on one of my own targeted web sites involved the film *Titanic*. As soon as sheet music was available from the film, I put information on where to find that sheet music on my *Pianist's Guide to the Internet*. I then submitted that page to the search engines. The result was a flood of hits from pianists searching on the term "Titanic sheet music" looking for music for "My Heart Will Go On" from the film. That brought in a lot of traffic and introduced my site and piano music to a number of pianists who might not have found it otherwise. Plus, I provided them with useful information they were interested in.

Newscasting does require excellent timing. Whenever big news breaks, sites using this technique to market themselves pop up everywhere. You have to jump on it first to get the first big wave of visitors, so keep your eyes glued on the news.

Want Auto-Newsfeeds? There are dozens of web sites that will provide you with automated newsfeeds you can install on your web site. In most cases, you can select the topic of your choice (entertainment, music business, etc.) and simply cut and paste the code into your HTML. However, be aware that while this provides an excellent service to your visitors, it is no substitute for newscasting as discussed above. These automated newsfeeds are dynamically generated on your web site. That means the story content will not affect the search relevance of your web site as the text of the story does not actually reside on your page. Still interested in Newsfeeds? See *Newsfeeds* in the *Quick Reference Guide* for a few recommendations.

Divide and Conquer!

When you make use of the target by site strategy, you end up with a web site that contains an abundance of pages each addressing very specific sub-topics beneath your more general topic. For example, I categorize the online directory at the Music Biz Academy (http://www.musicbizacademy.com) into sub-topics about CD manufacturers, musician communities, talent agencies, radio promoters, copyright law and so on. Each page has its own strategic keywords and phrases which I submitted individually to the search engines. The end result is that each of these individual pages attract new visitors who are searching the Internet for very specific services. I get more traffic to my general topic web site by focusing on very specific, narrow topics for each page. This brings in more newsletter subscribers, more contacts, and more customers. More exposure means more business.

Dividing up one's web site into many sub-topical pages also allows you to test the effectiveness of new pages, marketing ideas, and keyword strategies. You may find that one particular page (or sub-topic) of your site becomes very popular on its own merit. When this happens, consider taking that page concept and spinning it off into its own domain name and web site. That's how the *Music Biz Academy* came to be. Originally, the Academy concept was a sub-topic of a larger, more generic music site. When it became obvious the Academy was a 'hit' on its own merit, I spun that off into its own domain name and launched the new web site. When I started on the Internet, I ran just one web site. Now I operate seven, each catering to a slightly difference audience.

If you have a hit web page and decide to spin it off to its own domain, that doesn't mean you stop cross-selling the services, products, CDs, or information you offer from your original site. In fact, you'll want to cross-sell them even more. Use your most popular web site to promote your other, less popular ones. Doing this not only keeps traffic flowing back and forth between domains, but it increases your overall exposure and it may boost your link popularity rating with the search engines.

Creating spin-offs like this is how you grow and diversify your online music business. You test new ideas, find what works, and then put your energy behind building and expanding those web sites that generate income for you. Over time, as you find more success and branch off into other areas, you'll find yourself creating your own little Internet empire!

The Power of Words - What You Know Can Sell Your Music!

Another way to target new customers is to write informative or instructional articles that would be of interest to your target audience. You already know a lot about your genre of music as well as your instrument, so why not write about it? Publishing articles or tip sheets on topics within your area of expertise is another great way to bring targeted traffic to your web site! Once your article is written, create a web page for that article, and at the bottom of the page include a descriptive byline that says something about you and your web site. Here's a real life example of a byline I include with every article I write:

"David Nevue is the founder of the Music Biz Academy (http://www.musicbizacademy.com). He is also a professional pianist, composer, recording artist, and author of the book, 'How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet.'"

This byline states 1) who I am, 2) advertises The Music Biz Academy 3) Provides a URL, 4) Includes a quick bio, and 5) Promotes this book. All that in two brief sentences. Be concise!

Finally, create your keywords and meta tags for each article page and submit it to the search engines. Once they have been submitted, these article pages will provide additional entry points to your web site from the search engines.

Now, here's where writing articles gets fun and potentially lucrative: once your article is posted on your own web site (probably your targeted site, but possibly even your band/artist site), find other successful sites that target the same audience as you do and contact the webmaster. Ask them to consider publishing your article. Webmasters are always looking for good, original content, and articles from freelancers like yourself make their job that much easier. If you do get your article on their web site (with your byline) you may get some bonus publicity. Most web sites will have their own opt-in e-mail list and if so, it's very possible you'll see your article included in their next mailing. This will give you additional exposure to several thousand readers! This is a HUGE boon for you and your own web site, because if any of those readers like your article in particular, they may contact you and ask to make use of your article in their own newsletters. One well-written article can go a long way!

For those of you writing indie music-related articles, I recommend you submit/suggest your articles to these fine e-zines. Most of these links go directly to the submit article page:

The Music Biz Digest: http://www.musicbizacademy.com/submit.htm
MusicDish: http://www.musicdish.com/ (submit to editor@musicdish.com)
dmusic: http://news.dmusic.com/submit
The Buzz Factor: http://www.thebuzzfactor.com (submit to info@thebuzzfactor.com)
The Muse's Muse: http://www.musesmuse.com/musenews.html (submit to editor@musesmuse.com)
Indie-Music.com News: http://www.indie-music.com/submit.php
IndieOneStop: http://www.indieonestop.com/info/add.html
BandRadio: http://www.bandradio.com/news/submissions/
Galaris: http://www.galaris.com
The Bard's Crier   http://www.bardscrier.com/writeus.shtml

Free Content for Your Web Site!

You can also take the opposite approach and invite visitors to your web site to submit their own articles for consideration. Once they do, (and if the article is on topic) create a new web page using the new article just as you would your own article, fully-optimized and prepared for search engine submission. The more articles you have indexed by the search engines, the more exposure potential you have. Once again, each article should contain a link reference back to your home page or your merchandise as you feel is appropriate. Each new article acts as one more doorway from the search engines to your web site!

If you want to find articles that go beyond just the music biz, there are a number of websites where you can both submit your articles for possible distribution as well as find free content for your own e-mail newsletter or website. Here are a few of them:

The Syndicator: http://www.web-source.net/syndicator.htm
Article Announce: http://www.web-source.net/article-announce.htm

60

FreeSticky:	http://www.freesticky.com/stickyweb/
EzineArticles.com:	http://www.ezinearticles.com/
IdeaMarkers.com:	http://www.ideamarketers.com/
Content Exchange:	http://www.content-exchange.com/
Free Content:	http://www.certificate.net/wwio/
ARA Content:	http://www.aracopy.com/

Customer Referrals

Your visitors, whom you've already targeted, can help you further increase traffic to your web site. One way to do this is to set up a referral script on your web site so that your visitor can easily recommend your site to their friends and acquaintances.

Recommend-it.com is one of the most popular referral service on the Internet. Certainly, it's easy to set up and use. Once you register, Recommend-it.com automatically generates HTML code that you can cut and paste into your own web pages. Once you've pasted the HTML, the Recommend-it.com logo appears on your site. When your visitor clicks on this logo, a small Recommend-it pop-up window appears where they can fill out a form to recommend your web site to their friends. Once they submit that form, an e-mail is sent to those recipients.

Many other referal scripts like this can be found on the Internet. HostedScripts.com offers one for free at http://www.hostedscripts.com/webrecommend.html, and there's a really nice one you can pay a small fee for at http://www.cgibiz.com/tell.shtml . More can be found in many of the script libraries listed in the *Quick Reference Guide* under *Scripts, Forms, Site Tools and More*.

Targeted Link Partnerships

Go to your favorite search engine and type in some of your most powerful keywords and phrases for your web site. Take note of two things; first, which web sites are in the top twenty or so for each keyword? Secondly, which 'sponsor' sites pop up when searching on your keywords?

It will be to your advantage, both in terms of targeting your audience and for link popularity reasons, to try and create link partnerships with these top ranked and sponsor web sites. If you are able to make your site accessible via a link from sites already getting a high volume of traffic, you will benefit from their promotion also. You benefit both because these sites already enjoy high search engine positions for your particular key phrases and because they target the very same audience you are trying to reach. If your prospective customer is visiting one of these popular web sites, it would be nice if there was some way for that customer to click from that web site and go directly to yours!

So, how do you approach these web sites to ask for a link to your web site? Think of something you can to offer the webmasters of these other, more popular web sites. What does your web site have that would benefit their visitors? Perhaps you can offer a service, information, or a product. Even just offering to exchange links for the sake of cross-promotion is perfectly acceptable.

Sometimes it can feel awkward coming right out and asking other web sites to link to you. There is an easy way around this. Consider managing a directory of web sites you feel you can recommend to your own, targeted visitors. These might be your personal favorites or those that position well in the search engines on your own strategic keywords. Each week, feature a new site and contact the webmaster to inform them that you are featuring them. After handing them the compliment, graciously ask if they will consider linking back to you.

For example, at *The Music Biz Academy,* I find and review web sites I feel are beneficial and valuable to the independent music community as a whole. These web sites are sorted by topic in my Musician's Internet Resource Directory (see http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory). Whenever I find an independent music-related site I really like or would like exposure on, I review their web site, providing a link from my pages to their site. Once the review is up, I contact the webmaster of the site with an e-mail similar to the following:

Subject: Your Web Site Featured at The Music Biz Academy!

Message: Dear Webmaster, I wanted to let you know we are featuring your web site this week at the Music Biz Academy! You can see your review at http://www.musicbizacademy.com . Your listing will be permanently included in our directory, as well as featured in our next newsletter. Please take a look!

If you feel our web site may be of interest to your visitors, please do consider linking back to us. We would very much appreciate the exposure on your web site! Once again, congratulations on a great site!

Best regards,

David Nevue
The Music Biz Academy
http://www.musicbizacademy.com
http://www.mp3.com/davidnevue

Not only do webmasters visit the Academy to check out the review I gave them, they are often impressed enough by what they see to link to my web site from theirs. Using reciprocal links, you can generate a lot of goodwill, and you will find, over time, that by doing this you will begin to develop strategic relationships with other musicians just like yourself. You will be able to help each other. I have met some of my best contacts this way! Goodwill generates good word-of-mouth, and word-of-mouth makes for great publicity!

Once you have established your site on the Internet, you may periodically want to see who out there is linking back to your web pages. You can easily use Google to find out who is linking to your web site. Just visit http://www.google.com/help/features.html#link for info on that. For a *really* cool look at your reciprocal link statistics, check out the free Link Popularity Checker at http://www.marketleap.com/publinkpop/ . You'll be amazed.

Maintaining the Sales Machine

The bigger you get, the more web sites you expand into, the more maintenance you'll have to do. Any web site you create should be updated on a regular basis to keep up with new and innovative technologies, as well as to keep your site appearance and site information current. Doing so gives your site life, and it encourages your visitors to return. The more they return, the more opportunity you have to promote your music or other products.

I recommend you check any links you have to other web sites on at least a monthly basis. This is fairly easy to do using software like Xenu's Link Sleuth (http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html) or online tools such as LinkAlarm (http://www.linkalarm.com/) or even Link Valet (http://valet.htmlhelp.com/link.html). I also recommend you check all your pages to ensure they are loading quickly and properly. If you find another site layout you like better than yours, use the inspiration to redesign your site. If you continually update and change your site(s), you will find that visitors will return again and again to see what's new.

"But," you say, "I don't have time to do all this. This is way too much for me." If that's how you feel, I can totally understand where you are coming from. The targeting by site concept in particular can be very over-whelming, especially if you find it difficult enough just to complete and market your own, personal web site. If this is the case for you, then don't worry about trying to develop this strategy right now. Tuck this information into the back of your mind for later, when you have more web experience. This style of targeting is fairly advanced, and there are other ways to bring new customers to your web site, as I shall demonstrate shortly. All I'm trying to do right now, since we're on the topic of targeting customers, is pass the knowledge I have to you so you can decide what works best for you.

Get the Hits That Really Count!

Here's something to remember: if you receive 1,000 hits a day on your web page, it won't mean a thing if only one of those visitors is interested in your product. Use your time and energy to generate publicity that brings you a meaningful, targeted audience! Don't worry about getting *thousands* of random hits on your site. It's the targeted visitors who will buy your product that you really want!

Now, let's talk about your press release....

Your Internet Press Release - How to Write It and Where to Send It!

Making Noise About Your Web Site!

If you're doing anything worthwhile at your web site, you ought to be sending out press releases on a periodic basis. These press or news releases can be sent to your music fans, subscribers to your e-mail list (covered in detail later), or the music industry at large. However, be careful who you target your press release to. The last thing you want to do is start sending your press releases to people who don't want them. The line between an appropriate press release and spam can be a very thin one. For example, the press release for your band's new CD would not likely be considered real news to the music industry at large (sorry, but unless you're a mega-star, it wouldn't), so you should avoid sending e-mails to announce your new CD to the major record labels and A&R people. That would likely irritate the very A&R people you wish to attract! I myself receive unsolicited press releases from artists that, after the umpteenth time, I really don't want. Their e-mail address has permanently been placed in my 'nuisance' spam filter. That's exactly the kind of thing you don't want to do!

If you want to send out a press release about your brand new just-released CD, ask yourself the question, "Who cares about my new CD?" Your fans do, so a news release sent to them would be appropriate. Any time you prepare a press release or news announcement, ask yourself "Who cares?" The answer to that question is a good test to determine whether or not your news item is worthy of widespread distribution. Here are some real life examples:

When I release my brand new CD, *who cares?* My fans do, so the news release would be sent to them, as well as those who have subscribed to my personal e-mail list. When my Midnight Rain record label releases a CD sampler of solo piano music, *who cares?* Piano music fans in general. So the press release would be sent to any Internet newsgroup where piano music is a topic of interest, as well as any piano-related music sites that host advertising or solicit news releases. When I release a new edition of this book, *who cares?* Pretty much any working musician would, as well as the music industry as a whole, so the press release would be sent to the appropriate music newsgroups, independent music sites, online music e-zines and so on.

So, are you working on a project worthy of widespread recognition? Do you have an event or news you want to get the word out about? Here are a few places online to consider sending your press release:

Mi2N: The Music Industry News Network (http://www.mi2n.com/input.php3) is the first place to go to find out what's going on *right now* in the music industry. Every day, you'll find dozens of new stories, and you can submit yours. Some items also get published in MusicDish (http://www.musicdish.com), which is owned by the same people. Don't miss this one.

Harmony Central (http://harmony-central.com/) has been around forever and is one of the more popular music news sites on the Internet. With over 70,000 unique visitors per day, getting your press release listed here should be a top priority. E-mail your news to: news@harmony-central.com .

dmusic (http://news.dmusic.com/submit) is a major press release outlet, and its news is picked up by news syndicator Moreover.com. Articles and information submitted (and approved) by dmusic tend to get fairly good exposure.

PR Web (http://www.prweb.com/) is a free wire service that will host and catalogue your press releases at no charge. Their releases get over 2 million page views per month. All press releases are posted on the site indefinitely, and many are distributed through their syndicated newsfeed service. PRWeb also maintains a list of subscribers who receive a daily e-mail that includes press releases matching their selected criteria.

Pressbox - U.K. Press (http://www.pressbox.co.uk/index.html) is a free press release service that makes your release viewable to journalists seeking stories for their publications.

The Music Biz Academy (http://www.musicbizacademy.com) is my own music business home on the Net, and I'm interested in your press release if it contains information useful to independent musicians as a whole. So, while I'm *not* interested in news about your new CD release, if you can offer a service or information that is of use to other independent musicians, feel free to send it my way. Submit your info at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/contact.htm

JavaMusic (http://www.javamusic.com/News/Submit.asp) is a very well-established musician's community. All articles and press releases will be considered.

Gajoob's DiY Report (http://www.gajoob.com/diyreport/) is not only interested in your press releases, but in your personal band sites and CD release information, so don't be afraid to submit it to them. E-mail info to info@gajoob.com

If you want to go for broke, try eReleases (http://www.ereleases.com/). For $349 they will submit your press release to 10,000 opt-in journalists. They also have a *targeted* music distribution list which you can add on for no additional charge. The latter list covers most of the mainstream music magazines such as Rolling Stone, Hit Parade, Circus, Keyboard Magazine and so on.

Another option is the Internet News Bureau (http://www.newsbureau.com/). For $275, they will distribute your press release or web site announcement to specific lists, including a fairly comprehensive list of arts, entertainment, and music media outlets.

How to Write a Press Release

Looking for help writing a press release? Writing is definitely an acquired skill. Here are some basic guidelines:

1) *Write a Story* - Whatever it is you're marketing, whether it be your band, your CD, your web site, or other product, write your release in such a way that it tells a story. However, rather than writing a story ABOUT your product, write a story about the NEED that it fulfills. This is especially useful when writing a press release about a web site. What need does your web site fulfill? How can you create a story that demonstrates that need?

2) *Write an Article* - It may be helpful to think of your press release as an article, rather than advertising for your product or service directly. The article should provide information to your reader that creates the desire for your product. It might be best to give an actual example. Here is a press release/article combo I've used in the past for this very book:

SELLING YOUR MUSIC ON THE NET: KEY STRATEGIES TO SUCCESS
http://www.musicbizacademy.com/articles/musicpromotion/strategies.htm

So, you've got your own CD and now you want to sell your music on the Net. You probably have two burning questions: Where do I start? and How many CDs will I sell?

There's no doubt that the WWW provides a unique music marketing opportunity for musicians. If you market yourself successfully, you could find yourself selling music to new customers all over the world. But how realistic of a goal is this to accomplish?

Just to give you some background, a recent GVU web user survey states that 41% of all respondees had purchased music from the web. That's great news, right? That's a very large number when you consider there are estimates of well over 130 million people using the Net. However, another survey of actual buyers indicates how this worked: 70% of the buyers searched for the item they bought, 16% searched for a topic related to what they bought, and 4% searched for the name of another product. Adding it up, 90% of the buyers used the Internet as a modern-day cross between the Yellow Pages and the mail order ads you find near the back of most magazines. So the question is, what does this tell you about selling your music on the Net?

Quite simply, it means that creating a web page to sell your music is not going to be enough. Even if you submit your site to the search engines, you're not likely to see a significant traffic increase. Think about it. If 90% of the buyers out there already know what they are looking for and are searching for that particular item or topic, how will they find you, someone whose music they have likely never heard of?

Here's the slap-in-the-face reality: In our experience, the typical musician sells between two and five CDs a year from their web site. That's it. Sales that low certainly do not justify putting your music online. Can you do better? Yes, you can do much, much better, but only if you have a good product and market it properly.

Before you begin creating your site, there are a few questions you should ask yourself:

1) What is unique about my music?
2) What general style of music are my fans most interested in?
3) What artists am I often compared to?
4) What information would my potential customers be searching for?

The key to your own success as a musician on the Internet is to determine first what your target audience is truly interested in. What topic or subject would your target audience be likely to search the Internet for? Once you have determined that, your site should be designed around that topic. This is the way you will bring visitors to your site: by offering them something they want, and providing them with the information they are looking for.

In our book, 'How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet' (http://www.promoteyourmusic.com), we use the example of a Flamenco guitar player. This guitarist has a brand new Flamenco guitar CD out. How could this musician bring Flamenco music fans to his site? What are Flamenco music fans interested in? Well, perhaps Flamenco guitar strumming techniques, gypsy music, Spanish guitar, or popular Flamenco artists like Jesse Cook or Ottmar Liebert. These are all topics potential clients of this artist are likely to search for. Thus, this musician should design a site centered around these or similar topics. In this way, this musician targets his audience, bringing in those visitors most likely to be interested in his music. Once he has their attention, then he pitches his music. You can do the same simply by taking the time to research what it is fans of your music are likely to search the Net for.

Does that sound like a lot of work? Yes, you're right, it is, because you essentially devote your time to providing visitors with information. Not only that, but you have to consistently update that information. You want to sell CDs? This is the kind of work required. If you do it right, you'll find you're shipping CDs out on a regular basis.

This powerful marketing strategy is but one that we cover in our book, 'How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet.' Updated every three to six months, this easy-to-read guide gives you the details on

what online music promotion strategies work and which do not. If you're going to make the time investment required to sell your music online, why not do it right the first time? This book, written by a musician who's spent years testing music promotion strategies, will give you the opportunity to jump onto the Internet with confidence.

You'll find a lot to think about, and enough to keep you busy selling music on the Net as long as you wish.

'How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet'
http://www.promoteyourmusic.com

So you see, in this press release article we demonstrate the need for our product, then give the necessary contact details for finding out more information. Here are some other valuable resources to look to for help writing your press release:

How to Write a Successful Press Release:
http://webdeveloper.internet.com/management/manage_write_press_release.html

How to Write a Music-Related Press Release:
http://www.knab.com/press.htm

The Anatomy of a Press Release:
http://www.pressflash.com/anatomy.html

Press Release Writing Tips:
http://www.press-release-writing.com/

Proven Strategies for Selling Your Music

How to Turn Your Visitors Into Dollars

I've talked about how to prepare your web site for the search engines. I've taken you step-by-step through how to target your customers using keywords, meta-tags, news, targeted sites, reviews and articles. But how do you effectively sell your music once you have attracted a visitor to your web site? That's the topic I will address in this chapter, specifically, how to convert visitors into sales.

Limit Your Visitors' Options

First of all, there is a golden rule to marketing any product on the Net: Limit your customers' options. Realize that any new visitor to your web site has never seen it before. From their perspective, your web site is a maze of new information they must navigate. There is one question on their mind: "Where do I go now?" So, your job is to take your visitor by the hand and walk them to the point of purchasing your music.

The more links and graphics you have on your web page, the more distracted and confused your visitor is going to be. This is why I say you should limit your customers' options. Keep it simple! The fewer links and graphics you have on a web page, the more likely your visitor is going to click on the link you really want them to click on. Below are a few suggestions for getting your visitors' attention.

Music to Their Ears

There are certain marketing 'buzz' words that, by their very nature, draw attention to themselves. One of those is the word FREE. Free Music, Free Trial, Try it Free, Free Stuff Here, Free This, Free That, you name it. People like free stuff! Just having the word somewhere on your web page will draw your visitors' attention. So, if you want to sell your music, incorporate that word into your marketing strategy. Here's how:

Win a Free CD!

As previously mentioned, John, our Flamenco guitar player, created a web site about Flamenco music in general to attract a specific target audience to his web site. Wouldn't you think those targeted visitors might like a chance to win a free Flamenco CD? Yes! Contests are a great way to publicize your music and build up a database of interested customers. Here's how you do it:

First, create a link to your contest from your main pages. It might simply say something to the effect of "Win a Free Flamenco Guitar CD! Click Here!" This link will lead to your contest page. On the contest page have complete information about the CD, as well as RealAudio and MP3 sound files for your visitors to listen to. On this contest page, give your visitor the option to either a) buy the CD now (with a link to your order page), b) try the CD free in their home (see *Try Before You Buy* section below for details) or c) enter their name in your monthly drawing for a free CD.

Next, use a web form (or just an e-mail link if you prefer) to take your visitor's information. Get their full name and address and get their e-mail address. Their e-mail address is *required* because you will use that to notify them if they win the drawing. I also suggest you use the form to take a very brief survey. Ask simple questions like, "How did you find our site?" or "How can we improve our site?" You'll find out a lot about

your audience this way, as well as get some useful data that may influence the way you market or design your site. Don't ask more than two or three questions, however, or else you'll discourage people from entering.

Once a month have a drawing to give away a free copy of one of your CDs. Notify your winner and send them the CD (be sure when you mail them the CD you include an order form for your other CDs if you have them!) Next, send an e-mail to every person that entered your contest to let them know who the lucky winner was, and within that e-mail include information on how to either: a) enter next month's drawing to try again, b) buy the CD right now, or c) try out the CD free in their home (see *Try Before You Buy!* section below).

What you've done is created an excuse to advertise your CDs via e-mail to many potential customers at one time. If you get a hundred entries, you hand out one free CD, but potentially get two or three orders, not to mention the fact that you have sent your order form to the winner. If the winner loves the CD, they may end up coming back to purchase more music.

One Thing NOT to Advertise

Such a contest is a great way to market your music directly to your visitors, whether that's via your targeted site, your personal artist site, or both. However, your contest is NOT something you want to advertise beyond your web site. Why? Because most people will take anything if it's free. Think about it. If you post a message to bulletin boards, discussion groups or newsgroups promoting your free CD contest, are you properly targeting your customer? Or, are you inviting visitors who are just looking for a handout? In most cases, probably the latter.

What I recommend you do is make your 'free CD' contest a reward to those visitors who already come to your site because they are truly interested in your product or targeted topic. Then you know the entries you receive are prospective sales. As you build up your database of names and e-mail addresses, you're not creating a list of freeloaders, you're generating a list of potentially interested buyers.

Try Before You Buy!

Another way to attract your visitors' attention is to offer them a means of trying out one of your CDs without asking them to pay anything up front. This minimizes their risk. Have you ever picked up a CD in the store because it looked cool and wished you could hear it? Most of the time you probably end up putting it back in the bin. After all, your money is limited and you want to spend it on the music you know you'll like. What if the sales clerk said, "Hey buddy, you wanna take that CD home and try it out? If you like it, you can pay me for it later. If you don't like it, just bring it back." How much more likely are you to take that CD home to try out?

The 'Try Before You Buy' marketing strategy uses the same concept. You can spark your visitors' interest by offering them your music for free up front. Tell your visitor they don't have to pay for your CD until *after* they have listened to it in their own home. If yours is a good product, properly targeted, once you have the CD in your customer's hands, you should make a sale about 70% of the time.

Let me once again use the example of John, our Flamenco guitar player. Near the top of each web page, John has an ad that says something to this effect:

(CD Photo)
Try This CD Free!
If you enjoy great Flamenco music, try our featured artist's latest CD
FREE in your home for two weeks! Click here for details!

The potential customer's curiosity is roused. He likes Flamenco music, the album cover looks interesting and the word FREE has gotten his attention. So, he clicks on the link and is taken to another page dedicated to promoting our artist's music. Here the artist proposes a deal to his potential customer:

We want to encourage Flamenco music lovers on the Internet to give our music a try. To do so, we're willing to send you our featured artist's latest Flamenco CD to try out in your home at no charge! You will have two weeks to review the CD. After that point you may pay for the CD (we will bill you $10 + $3 shipping) or return the CD if you are not completely satisfied! You have nothing to lose!

Be sure you have some sound samples right there for the customer to listen to. Then provide the customer with ordering instructions…

To order the CD, simply fill out the form below and submit it to us. We'll then process your order. Thanks for giving our featured artist's music a try!

You can have the customer use an online form to submit the order or simply e-mail you. You may try to increase your sales by reducing the price of your CD. For example, you might sell your CD for $8, banking on the possibility that you might gain more sales, but I found that $10-$12 (plus shipping) actually seems to bring the best results, overall.

NOTE: Although this technique works well, based on my experience about half of your customers will be slow to pay. You may need to send regular monthly 'payment due' e-mail (or postal mail) reminders to these customers if they have not paid up (just like any other business would). This means that on your online form you must *require* the customer include their e-mail address. Once you receive the order request, respond to the customer with an e-mail order confirmation. If the e-mail bounces, don't send the CD. Once you ship the order, send the customer an e-mail shipping confirmation. This gives you an opportunity to both remind your customer the product is on its way, as well as remind them of the terms of the 'try before you buy' offer.

As I stated before, in my experience about 70% of the time customers do pay for the CD. To get that return rate, however, you have to be persistent with your follow-up payment due notices. Do be prepared to lose a few CDs here and there, but overall, you should bring in more sales than you lose. Remember, the customers who do pay up will often buy your other CDs in the future at full price, making up for those who do not pay. In fact, once your customer does pay, e-mail them a payment confirmation with your thanks. Within this e-mail include any special offers you might have for your other CDs or merchandise.

ANOTHER NOTE: One of my readers suggested the idea of taking credit card information up-front from customers, but only billing them if they do not return the CD within a certain period of time. So, in other words, try the CD free, if you like it, keep it and your credit card will be billed automatically. If you don't like it, return it within 30 days (or some other period you're comfortable with) and it will cost you nothing. This suggestion takes care of the problem of people who do not pay up, nor return the CD. The downside, however, is that fewer people will take advantage of the offer. Still, it may be a viable alternative if you are concerned about losing a few CDs and have the technical means to pre-authorize credit cards securely while delaying the actual billing.

IMPORTANT: If you are living in the U.S. or Canada, I strongly recommend you limit this 'try before you buy' offer to customers also living in the U.S. and Canada. I have found it much more difficult to collect payments from customers overseas. When you figure in the additional postage cost to mail merchandise via air mail, it's just not worth the risk, unless, of course, you have the customer's pre-authorized credit card number on file.

The 'Sampler' Effect

One disadvantage of the 'try before you buy' offer, aside from the risk of non-payment, is the paperwork, follow-ups and customer tracking involved. The strategy does work, and does get your music in your customers' hands, but for those of you looking for something a bit simpler, there is another marketing strategy I have found works *almost* as well without as much hassle. I'll refer to it here as the 'Sampler Effect.'

If there is one thing I've noticed in recent marketing experiments, it is the effectiveness of the term 'sampler' when promoting music. It's another one of those buzz words. For quite some time I'd been selling one of my CDs, a solo piano project called "While the Trees Sleep" at a reduced price ($7.95) from my web site. I did so in an effort to further entice visitors to take a chance on buying the CD since, from my experience, many of those buyers would come back and purchase other CDs at full price.

One day, on a whim, I decided to promote this CD as a sampler of my music. That was, after all, an accurate description of my intent, which was to offer potential buyers the opportunity to sample my music on CD for a very low price. I was surprised by the result. The use of the term 'sampler' nearly doubled the number of visits to my sampler promotion page. From there I was able to further interest my visitors with streaming RealAudio files and details about the CD. The effect on sales was quite noticeable.

The One-Two Punch: Combining Samplers and Coupons

Still, some customers need a bigger push to get them to buy new music. I'd like to suggest another strategy to help you further encourage them to do that. Simply stated, offer your visitor 'coupons' for buying your sampler. Tell your customer that if they buy your CD sampler, you will give them a special gift coupon for $4-$5 off any other full-priced CD in your catalog. This in effect gives your customer the sampler for practically nothing if they make use of your coupon. If they don't use it, you lose nothing. If they do, you make a few more bucks, and you are turning your one-time visitor into a repeat customer, who will be even more likely to purchase more of your product later.

Sampler Cassettes & CDs

Of course, the best sampler to offer your customers is a true compilation album of your best music. This is exactly what I eventually did, creating an album of solo piano music I called "Whisperings" which contained fan favorites from my first four CDs. If you have released three or more CDs, you might seriously consider this route. Your sampler will give your buyer a great overview of your music and your history, which in turn may lead to more sales.

So, should you manufacture sampler CDs or cassettes? When doing a side project like a compilation sampler, especially if you are doing small quantities, it's quite tempting to manufacture cassettes rather than CDs. Cassettes are the easiest and least expensive to produce. Accupress Duplication (http://www.accupress.com) offers one of the best prices I've found on a small run of professional quality cassettes, working out to just over a buck a cassette if you purchase 500.

Of course, the main difficulty with cassettes is that these days most people are just not inclined to buy them. I can state for a fact that this is true. For quite awhile, I sold my CD sampler, mentioned above, for only $7.95. A cassette version of that very same sampler sold for only $2.95. Guess what? Everyone bought the CD. I still have a ton of cassettes sitting in a box in my garage! It just goes to show people are more interested in good music than saving a couple bucks.

On the plus side, however, cassettes are small and very easy to toss into a package you're already mailing. If you decide to manufacture cassette samplers, any time a customer orders one of your products, whether it be a CD, cassette, t-shirt, or anything else, throw your cassette sampler into the package for free. This really is the best reason to make samplers in the first place. Give your customer free stuff! Your customers will love you for it and this will further encourage your customers to purchase more of your music! You can also use it as a selling point, for example: "Buy this CD and receive a FREE cassette sampler!"

But what about making CD samplers? Most people mistakenly believe that CDs are very expensive to produce, but the fact is, they aren't. If you truly want to make a short run of CD samplers, Short Run Music, (http://www.shortrunmusic.com/) can provide you small quantities of retail-ready CDs for a very good price. Another interesting option is Mixonic (http://www.mixonic.com/) where you can literally design and create your own CDs online. These generally run just under $2 each, depending on the quantity you order. If you just can't make that kind financial investment, a cassette sampler is a fine way to start. Just realize that CDs will always far outperform cassette sales.

NOTE: See my comments on MP3.com in the upcoming chapter *The Best Places to Promote, Distribute and Sell Your Music Online* for another inexpensive, easy way to create CD samplers!

Have I Got a Deal for You....

If you have more than one CD to offer your customers, give them the option to buy your entire collection for a special, low price. In late 2001, I began selling all five of my CDs as a collection. My headline read "Buy 5 CDs for $50 Bucks!" (I added shipping on top of that). The result was quite amazing. In fact, I could hardly believe it! Almost half the CD orders I received were for the entire collection! It's the 'Costco,' buy-in-bulk mentality. People are willing to spend more money if it means a good deal! This change alone greatly increased the volume of my CD sales online.

I now have seven CDs in my catalog, and offer a "7 CD for $70 Bucks" option. I also offer "Any 5 CDs for $50 Bucks," as well as "Any 3 CDs for $35 Bucks." I now sell more CDs in bulk than I do as singles. If you have more than one album, give this strategy a try. For me, just doing this one thing increased CD sales greatly from my personal artist web site.

By the way, this strategy also works *very* well when selling CDs at gigs! When I perform live, I offer a '3-pack' of my CDs for only $35 and almost half my orders are for the 3 CD special. Do the math. If, for example, I sell CDs to 50 customers, and half of those customers purchase the 3-pack, that means that while 25 people only bought 1 CD each (at $15), 25 bought 3 CDs each (at $35). That adds up to 100 total CDs sold, with 75 of those sales coming from those that purchased the 3-pack. So, my total sales for 50 customers, based upon these figures, is $1,250, which averages out to $12.50 for each CD sold. Not a bad profit at all.

Damaged Goods?

Remember the first time you ordered CDs from a manufacturer and how excited you were when those boxes of CDs arrived? Then you opened up the first box.... only to discover that every so often you'd find a CD with a cracked case, bent artwork, shredded shrink wrap or some other such thing. It seems inevitable, that when manufacturing CDs in bulk you always get a few bad apples. I've worked with four CD manufacturers over the years, and I've encountered this with every single one, to greater and lesser degrees. Of course, if you have too many bad CDs, you ought to return them, but if you have only a few here and there, sometimes it's just easier to hang onto them and use them for demo purposes. After all, you can't sell them, right?

Why not use these CDs in your online marketing efforts? Most of the time, all you need to do is replace a cracked case or another easily replaceable component to make the CD as good as new. All you are missing at that point is the shrink wrap. Here are some suggestions for using your 'damaged goods:'

1) Once you've replaced the broken parts, use these CDs as giveaways in your online contests or even at shows. Since you are giving away CDs for free, so you might as well use these. No one will care that they are not shrink wrapped.

2) Sell these CDs as discounted stock or online specials. State up front these CDs are direct from the manufacturer and never used or played, they are just without the shrink wrap. If you sell the CDs at half-price, you are still making money. It's better than throwing them in a box to collect dust.

3) Offer the repackaged, unwrapped CDs to benefits, charities or other causes you care about. This is a fantastic way to get your music out there! I have had my piano CDs included in gift packages for Valentines Day benefits, as well as used in 'grab bags' that were auctioned off to raise money for a cause.

You may also be interested in knowing for that just $139, you can purchase an individual shrink-wrap machine designed specifically for CDs. So if the issue is one of a cracked case, just replace that part, rewrap and you are set. For more information on this shrink wrap system, visit CDPro at http://www.cdwrapping.com/ . You can also buy shrink wrap systems and supplies from ULINE at http://www.uline.com/Class_16.asp .

How to Turn Your Visitors Into Long-Term Customers

Mail and Announcement Lists (Your E-Newsletter!)

The moment your visitor comes to your web site you start a relationship with them. That being the case, think about the kind of relationship you are developing with your potential customer. Is it a barely noticeable brush off? Is it a one-night stand? Do you just want their money? Or, are you interacting with your visitor, encouraging feedback and building a long-term relationship? You want your visitor to know you - to trust you - and using e-mail and announcement lists, you can lay a foundation for a lasting partnership, turning that visitor into a longtime customer!

One way to build that relationship with your visitor is to generate an electronic 'handshake.' That is, you exchange information. You agree to provide them with regular updates of the information they are looking for in exchange for their e-mail address and permission to e-mail them information on a weekly or monthly basis.

The best way to manage this handshake is to create a subscription-based electronic mailing list that visitors can subscribe to right from your web page. Visitors who are interested in what you are doing will subscribe to your list, giving you permission to e-mail them updates, announcements or your site newsletter whenever you want. This allows you to keep in touch with them, providing them with the information they want while continually reminding them about your site.

All of this is designed with the goal of turning your visitors into long-term customers. To manage this, I recommend you start two e-mail lists. The first, your *Site Update List,* is for those interested in general site information about your targeted web site, as well as the particular topic you are using to target your audience. Your second list is your *Fan List,* directed toward those who have purchased your CDs and supported your music. Using two lists, you can easily cater to both audiences.

The intent of your *Site Update List* is to remind the subscriber about your targeted site and encourage them to return. You provide them with the general news and information they want, but also throw in some teasers that require them to revisit the web site to receive more information. Use this list to pique your customers' interest

week after week. Your goal is to get them to return again and again until eventually they give your music a try, and hopefully, subscribe to your *Fan List*.

I have found great success selling music through my *Fan List*. One of the ways I encourage visitors to join this list is to offer CD specials available only to subscribers. These subscribers are then given access to a secret URL where they can take advantage of that month's special offer. At the end of each month, I bring the offer page down and replace it with a new one at a different URL. In this way, the subscriber knows the time to take advantage of the offer truly is limited. That creates an urgency, and that results in sales. In addition to special offers, my *Fan List* contains a personal letter, the latest news, CD reviews, interviews, FAQs, performance notes and an update on future projects.

TIP: As you compose your e-mail, always begin by reminding your recipient who you are and why they are getting your mail. Remind the customer that they subscribed to your list, and provide them with instructions for unsubscribing should they wish to do so. You don't want your e-mail to be mistaken for spam!

I've talked about why you should start an e-mail list, but how do you do it? There are an assortment of programs available to make managing Internet e-mail easier. You can find a comprehensive list of programs and web sites at http://www.thefreesite.com/Email_Freebies/ . I've had good luck using Yahoo's Group list program in the past. This web-based e-mail distributor can be found at http://groups.yahoo.com/ . Yahoo Groups makes it quick and easy to set up your own mailing list. You can call your list whatever you want, for example, mylist@yahoogroups.com. Groups will provide you the HTML to add to your page to allow your customer to subscribe to your mailing list directly from your web site. They can also subscribe simply by sending a blank e-mail to the list server. For example, to subscribe to the Music Biz Academy Digest list, send a blank e-mail to:

MusicBizAcademy-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

It's that easy. Once your list is created and you have subscribers, all you need to do is send your e-mail to the address you created (mylist@yahoogroups.com) and your message will be distributed to every subscriber on your list. It is as simple as that.

The one disadvantage of Yahoo Groups (and others like it) is that in most cases your subscriber has to go through a third-party sign-up system. In early 2002, I was curious how many potential subscribers I was losing due to that additional step and I set up a system to track the sign-up rate. Guess what? I found that 50-60% of users dropped out after arriving at the Yahoo Group sign-up form. Yikes!

So, I decided to investigate e-mail software, something I could purchase and set up on my own server to eliminate the Yahoo 'middle man.' For awhile, I settled on Group Mail, an inexpensive solution you can find at http://www.infacta.com/gm.html . My subscriber sign-ups quadrupled once I got this set up on my own server. I was really excited about it! So, I switched to this program for several months, but in doing so I learned a very big lesson: managing your own e-mail list server is an huge amount of work! Although my sign-ups quadrupled, many of those extra sign-ups were bogus e-mail addresses. So, I was constantly dealing with bounces, lost e-mails and other irritating hassles. One of my targeted e-mail lists grew to over 20,000 subscribers very quickly, but I was pulling out my hair with technical problems every time I sent out a newsletter. In the end, I returned to using Yahoo Groups. Life was so much easier that way!

In the fall of 2002, I discovered another e-mail software program that is free, hosted entirely online, and fairly easy to set up. It's called Mojo Mail, and you can find it at http://mojo.skazat.com/ . I have started using it for two of my e-mail lists, and so far, so good. I very much like it, and it makes for a nice compromise between Yahoo Groups and Group Mail. There is some configuration involved in the set up, including some cgi script stuff that isn't too terribly difficult to figure out if you have even just a little scripting experience. The installa-

tion instructions at the Mojo Mail site are fairly simple and straightforward to follow. I was able to figure it out, and I'm not exactly a programming wiz.

E-mail Confirmations = Missed Opportunities

Speaking of e-mail list management, the subscriber confirmation e-mail is one of the most missed marketing opportunities on the Internet. When you set up your e-mail subscription system, one of your program options will be to send a subscription confirmation e-mail to the subscriber thanking them for joining your list. Most of the time, people just use the default confirmation e-mail in the software setup. This is a wasted opportunity.

Why not advertise your music, your CDs and/or other products in your subscription "thank you" e-mail? You can do so without getting verbose. It can be as simple as using your e-mail signature, or you can get a bit more detailed depending on your audience. For example, this is what I use when someone subscribes to The Music Biz Academy Digest newsletter:

Welcome to the Music Biz Academy Digest, a free newsletter from The Music Biz Academy at http://www.musicbizacademy.com. Thank you very much for subscribing! The Digest goes out every two weeks.

Be sure to check out these other resources from The Music Biz Academy:

Internet Resource Directory for Musicians
http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory

Articles & Tips
http://www.musicbizacademy.com/articles/index.htm

How to Promote Your Music Successfully on the Internet
http://www.musicbizacademy.com/bookstore/htpromotemusic.htm

Recommended Books and Materials
http://www.musicbizacademy.com/bookstore

Regards,

David Nevue
Midnight Rain Productions
The Music Biz Academy
http://www.musicbizacademy.com
http://www.mp3.com/davidnevue

This promotes the site, this book, as well as my MP3.com site to a willing recipient. For your Fan-based e-mail List, you can use the subscription confirmation e-mail to give your subscriber booking information, a link to your 'try before your buy' offer, or your contest. Think of the possibilities! If you are going to send out e-mail confirmation messages, you might as well use them to their full potential.

The same is true, by the way, for 'unsubscription' confirmation e-mails. If someone unsubscribes from your e-newsletter, it may be your last chance to pitch your music to that customer. Don't miss that opportunity.

Pop-Ups: Overused or Misunderstood?

Since we are on the topic of your last chance to pitch your music, let's talk about using pop-up windows for promotion.

First of all, if you do much surfing on the Net at all, chances are you have grown to detest pop-up windows. I know I have. There's nothing more irritating than visiting a web site where every new page you visit generates more unwanted browser windows! Pop-up windows have become a marketing taboo, almost to the point that if you tell someone you use pop-ups to advertise your product, they look at you like you're mad.

In my opinion, pop-ups are just like any other advertising medium. If you use them with restraint and common sense, within the proper context of your web site, they are a very powerful marketing tool. If, however, pop-ups are overused, you might as well throw rocks at your visitors, because all you are doing is chasing them away. You know what goes through my mind when I visit a web site that throws countless pop-ups at me? "This web site could care less about me." I can tell right away that all they want is my page view for their advertising revenue. It makes me feel like a statistic. Not a good way at all to develop a relationship with potential new customers!

You can, however, use pop-up windows to your advantage without irritating your visitors. First of all, most people realize that pop-up windows are just part of the Internet world-at-large. If you're going to surf the Net, you're going to see a few pop-ups. There's no getting around it. That said, if you have ONE pop-up window on your web site, your customer will forgive you for it. It's not that single pop-up window that drives people crazy, it's the constant, repetitive barrage of windows that gets under your skin.

In regards to using pop-up windows to promote your music, here's what I recommend: Use it once, and only once, to advertise your e-newsletter. Whether that is your *Site Update List*, or your *Fan List* newsletter depends on which site we are talking about. It's relatively easy to set up one pop-up window which will display only when your visitor exits your web site. Think of it this way: if you open a brand new store, and a new customer comes in and browses around, it's perfectly acceptable to ask them as they leave, "Would you like us to send you a note when we have a sale?" It's the same with your web site. It's OK to ask customers if they are interested in further information about your product.

So, set up a pop-up window that is generated only when a customer leaves your web site. In that window, simply let the customer know about your e-mail list, and provide a sign-up form from which they can subscribe if they wish. In many cases it may be your last opportunity to get that customer's information. If you can get them on your site update list, you will then have the opportunity to pitch your music to them later.

Setting up a pop-up window on your web site is not that difficult. I simply use the pop-up window generator from HomeBizz Online at http://www.homebizzonline.com/popupapplet.html . You will need to first create your 'window,' which is nothing more than an HTML page. Create your window page, save it, and give it a name. Then, use the tool at the address above to create the Javascript you will cut-and-paste into the page you want to generate the actual pop-up. You can set your pop-up window to pop up on exit, pop up only once, or even pop up under the browser window (a pop-under window). Once you've completed the fields in the pop-up window generator at HomeBizz Online, just generate the code following the instructions they provide.

Now, let's sum it all up...

10 Things to Do Right Now
to Improve Your Internet Sales!

As you can see, there's a lot involved in designing and marketing a web site designed to promote and sell your music. There's enough work here to keep you busy for several months! Not everything has to take a lot of time, however. Here are 10 things you can do right now to increase your Internet sales.

1) Simplify Your Web Site Design

Nothing is worse than making a visitor wait to load your page... except perhaps blinding your visitor with animations, killer backgrounds and overdone graphics. Take another, objective look at your web site design. Is it too cluttered? Do an overwhelming number of animations, buttons or links discourage your visitor from touring your site? If so, plan a site redesign that will narrow your focus and keep it simple. Remember to limit your visitors' options. Make it easy for them to navigate your web site. More text, less graphics should be your guide. Use javascript and animated icons with restraint to keep your site fast loading. You might enjoy the article, *Top Ten Ways to Irritate Your Visitors* at http://www.virtualpromote.com/top10.html

2) Clean Up Your Keywords and Page Titles

Your page title is the most important part of your page as far as the search engines are concerned. Make sure your title contains your most strategic keywords but as you do so, remember that your page title must be attractive to a human being as well as the search engine, so keep it short and to the point. Your title should be a brief, concise, one-line ad that will attract your target audience.

3) Submit Your Most Important Pages to Google

Registering your web pages with the Google search engine is fast and free. Don't wait for the robots to come to you, submit every major page to Google as soon as possible. As you add new pages to your site, vary your keywords and page titles as appropriate for that page. Use each additional page to target a specific topic of interest to your potential customer. The more pages you have indexed by the search engines, the more likely it is your target customer will find you. Since Google now provides search results for over 80% of the Internet, registering there should be a priority.

4) Use the Microphone

If you are a performing musician, don't be afraid to make use of the microphone. Fearlessly promote your web site from the stage using some of the easy-to-do suggestions offered within these pages.

5) Offer 'Free' Music

In the last chapter, I discussed how powerful the word 'free' is. Anytime you offer something free, you're going to attract your visitors' attention. Whether you use contests, coupons, free samplers, or even the 'try before you buy' approach, you should see an increase in sales.

6) Accept Credit Cards From Your Web Site

This is an absolute must. Whether you have an existing merchant vendor account or not, there are options open to you which are discussed within these pages. At the very least, place your CD with an online music company that does accept credit cards (such as CDBaby.com or CDStreet.com) and provide your customers with a link to your storefront at that site.

7) Make it Easy to Order Music
Your goal should be to make it as easy as possible to order your music. The more ways your customer has to purchase your CD, the more likely they are do to so. Let them order by e-mail, credit card, phone, fax, mail, and anything else you can think of. Better to encourage your customer to buy NOW, rather than putting it off until later. If they put it off, they are unlikely to order at all.

8) Sell CDs in Bulk
If you've got more than one CD, offer your visitors a package deal. You'll be surprised how many people will go for it. This alone should greatly increase the number of CDs you are selling online.

9) Update, Update, Update!
Give your visitors a reason to come back to your site again and again. Make visible, weekly updates to your web site and provide readers with information they will be interested in. Be open to the idea that your visitors are probably interested in more than just your music. Consider a music news page, band opportunities, promotion ideas, touring ideas, whatever you can think of to bring in traffic and keep them coming back.

10) Create a Buzz!
Start an e-mail news list for your fans and keep them involved in what you're doing. The more involved your fans are, the more likely you are to make a sale to them or their friends. In addition, press releases and topical articles, when used properly, can keep new traffic coming in on a regular basis. Think about creative services or information you can offer from your web site that your targeted audience may want to hear about.

The Best Places to Promote, Sell, and Distribute Your Music Online

Targeting by Buzz

Having talked extensively about how to promote your music using your own web site as well as a targeted web site, I now want to branch out into a promotion strategy that I like to refer to as 'targeting by buzz.' That is, rather than promoting your music on just your official home page or your targeted page, you take your music out to the places where people are actively looking for new music. Your goal, when promoting your music to these web sites and services, is the same as when you promote to the search engines, the newsgroups, discussion groups, and to your e-mail lists: to drive traffic to your personal artist site.

A Thousand Points of Light?

Of course, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of music-related web sites where you can create an individual artist page, upload your music, set up shop and sell your CDs. If you really wanted to, you could find a thousand different places to sell and promote your music online. Imagine how cool it would be to brag to your friends that you're selling your CDs on over 1000 web sites! But is that *really* what you want to do? Do you really want to manage CD stock, sales, stats and inventory for 1000 different web sites?

No, of course you don't! Consider my earlier chapter on search engines. There are *thousands* of search engines on the Internet, but 95% of all Internet users visit only a half-dozen of them. Why go to the effort of optimizing and submitting your web site to each and every one of them? The same is true for online music promotion and distribution. Though there may be a thousand web sites or other Internet 'exposure points' where you can promote your music, only a few of those have a large enough user base to generate significant CD sales and exposure for you.

In this chapter, I'll give you my recommendations for what I believe are the best places to sell, promote, and distribute your music online. I base my choices on three important factors. First, which 'exposure points' are creating a buzz on the Internet? That is, who has the attention of the press? Secondly, which web sites are drawing the most Internet traffic from visitors looking for new music? Finally, which sites and services are musicians talking about and recommending? All of these factors have influenced my selections.

Setting Up Shop

Before I list my selections, I want to give you a strategic overview of how to use these third-party web sites and services to draw music to your own official artist site. Understanding this will help you organize your thoughts as you read through this material.

Many of the exposure points I will suggest give independent artists the tools necessary to create an artist home page within their web site. This means you can create your own 'mini-storefront' at numerous locations. The flexibility you have in creating a mini-store does vary from site to site, but most will allow you to upload audio samples of your music, a photo, a "buy" button, and a link to your official web site at the very least. Some offer additional options, such as the ability to create digital CDs or singles which customers can purchase and immediately download.

I first recommend you set up a mini-store on the top three or four sites on my list. Later, as you gain time, confidence and experience, add and experiment with the others. That way the process, which can be somewhat time consuming, isn't quite so overwhelming. At each of the exposure points you sign up with, set up your mini-store within its appropriate genre (if the option is available), and wherever possible, use the promotional tools provided by the host site or service to promote your music to its visitors.

Your task, as you promote your music to the online world abroad, is to use these points of exposure to attract interested visitors, redirect them to your own official artist page, and once you have them there, encourage them to purchase your music using the marketing methods described in previous chapters. Your aim is to use these web sites and services as a means of gaining new fans who will purchase your music or, at the very least, subscribe to your e-newsletter. Each of these points of exposure should be viewed as a doorway leading to your own, official artist site.

For a mini-store example, see my own MP3.com site at http://www.mp3.com/davidnevue . Note how the wording of the page is designed to direct visitors to my official web site, all the while providing music and CDs for those who prefer to stay at MP3.com.

I created the crude diagram below to illustrate the 'big picture,' which is actually quite simple in concept. Find your audience, get their attention, draw them in, and pitch your music. In the diagram below, you see how visitors are directed to your web site from all the various targeting points I've discussed throughout this book.
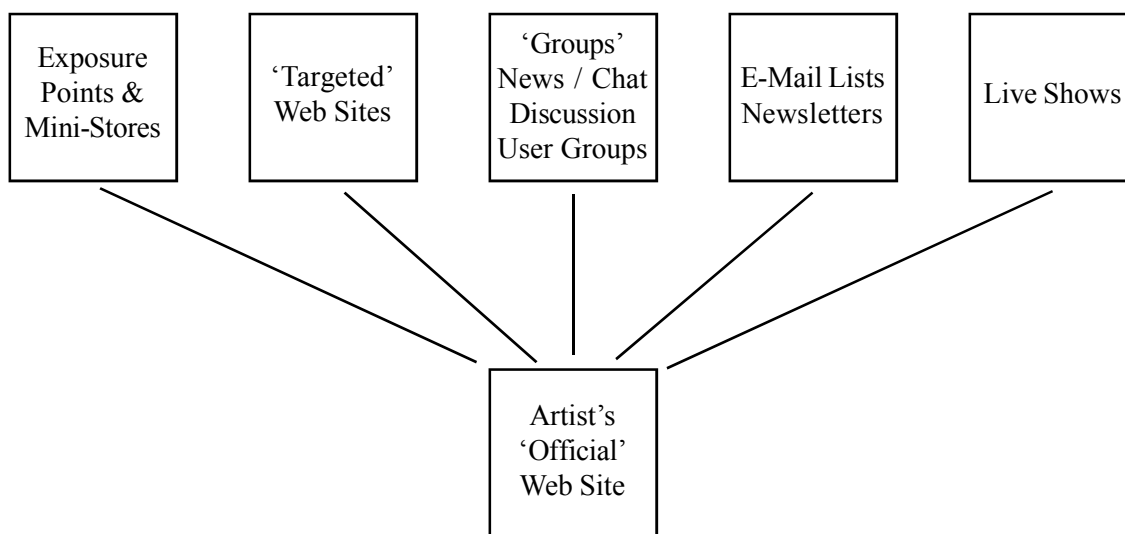
Having prepped you with the general marketing concept, here are my personal picks for the best places on the Internet to promote, sell and distribute your music online...

The #1 Place to Promote, Sell and Distribute Your Music....

1) **CD Baby -** (http://www.cdbaby.com) **:** CD Baby was started in 1997 by Derek Sivers, a musician just like yourself who just wanted an efficient way to sell his music on the web. Today, just a few years later, CD Baby is the 2nd largest seller of independent CDs on the Internet, 2nd only to Amazon.com! Boasting over 42,000 artists and over 20,000 *unique* visitors a day, CD Baby is the best organized, most talked about web hosting solution for musicians. According to the latest posted stats (as of this writing), CD Baby has sold over 548,000 CDs online to customers and paid $4,166,180.58 to independent musicians! That alone should be motivation enough for you to sign up.

There is a one-time $35 setup fee (per CD) to sign up with CD Baby. However, from that fee CD Baby creates a beautiful mini-store page for you with everything you need. You don't even have to upload your MP3 files to make your music available for streaming. CD Baby will do it all for you - just send them your CDs and they'll take care of everything else. From your CD Baby mini-store, you can take orders, link to your official web site and receive reviews from visitors about your CD. Finally, the administrative tools CD Baby provides you to manage your mini-store are very easy-to-use. When I first signed up, I was truly amazed that something so cool could be so simple!

Once you start selling CDs, CD Baby takes just $4 from each CD sold via their web site. You keep the rest. So, if you sell a CD for $12.95, you keep $8.95. CD Baby also keeps your CDs in its warehouse, so they handle all the shipping details, and when your stock gets low, CD Baby contacts you to request more. You get paid for sales by check as often as once per week, if you wish.

In additional to all this, CD Baby can provide you with digital music distribution to services like iTunes and Rhapsody. These two services alone provide music to *millions* of listeners for download and purchase each month. Once you're a member of CD Baby, you can, if you so elect, allow CD Baby to act as your 'label.' They then take your CD, digitally encode it, and submit it to the iTunes and Rhapsody stores. The cost for this additional encoding service is $40 per CD. That is a one-time fee, and for that fee your music will automatically be submitted to new digital services, such as AOL's MusicNet, EMusic.com, and BuyMusic.com as the opportunity becomes available. CD Baby takes only 9% of the profit from any sales you make through these digital distribution services, and you can terminate your contract at any time.

I really have to congratulate Derek Sivers and the whole CD Baby staff. CDBaby.com is, simply put, amazing. This is one baby you don't want to throw out with the bath water. Check it out.

Number Two to Number Ten...

2) **MP3.com** - (http://www.mp3.com) **:** For many years, MP3.com was my #1 choice for online music distribution. However, CD Baby's digital distribution efforts have truly leaped them past MP3.com which is, in my view, getting stale. Also, it was announced in July of 2003 that Vivendi Universal, who owns MP3.com, has put the site up for sale. So the future of MP3.com as a service remains highly speculative. I suspect that very shortly MP3.com as we know it will simply cease to exist. One day, you'll type "www.mp3.com" into your browser and find yourself redirected to another web site, perhaps Emusic.com, which is also owned by Vivendi.

Until that happens, however, for independent musicians seeking *pure exposure* for their music, MP3.com is still the place to be. Perform a search at Google for "music" and MP3.com is the #2 site listed. Search for "mp3" and it's the #1 site listed. Add to this that MP3.com boasts over 4.3 million *unique* visitors a month (as of July 2003), and you will be hard pressed to find a better place to put your music directly in the path of cyber-traffic.

What makes MP3.com truly cool is that you have the opportunity to promote your music right alongside major label artists. Think of it this way. What if you could stock your CDs in one of the world's largest record stores, but rather than having your music regulated to a bin in the back of the store, it was placed on the shelf right next to popular artists from your same genre? With a click of a button, any passer-by sampling music from the popular artists they love could *automatically* sample your music as well. Sound good? That's exactly the kind of exposure MP3.com offers independent musicians.

To start promoting your music on MP3.com, sign up at http://studio.mp3.com . It's free to join, though the 'basic' free service limits you to promoting only three songs. For as little as $4.95/month, you can upload and promote up to 100 songs at MP3.com. I suggest you do that. You'll find details about MP3.com's 'Gold' and 'Platinum' services at http://www.mp3.com/premium/ .

Once you've signed up, you can upload your songs and design your 'mini-store.' I recommend you arrange your songs in the order that you want to promote them, so that the tracks you really want to push are the first one listed on your MP3.com page. Finally, you can create digital versions of your CDs to sell from MP3.com, which I also suggest you do. I'll explain why in a moment.

Once your setup is complete, you can begin promoting your music to MP3.com's visitors. The way you do this is by generating and accumulating song plays. You generate song plays by a) getting your fans involved, b) promoting your MP3.com mini-store to visitors to your 'targeted' web sites, c) selling digital CDs from MP3.com, and d) participating in the MP3.com promo auctions. The more song plays you can accumulate, the higher your songs will appear in the charts for your selected genre. In this way, you promote your music right alongside major label artists.

Doing this very thing, I have garnered over 1.6 million plays of my songs, ranked as high as #11 on all of MP3.com, and had the #1 Classical and Easy Listening songs on more than one occasion. MP3.com, you see, is all about getting *visibility* for your music. The site has a vast network of users, including music industry insiders and people looking for music to include in their projects. My time on MP3.com has led directly to some great opportunities, including a CD distribution deal overseas, getting my music onto independent film and video projects as well as CD sampler projects. Most importantly, I have used MP3.com to direct thousands of visitors to my official web site, many of whom have purchased CDs and subscribed to my e-mail list.

We Interrupt this Program.... Just as this edition was going to press, MP3.com's promo auctions were suspended due to "streamlining" in preparation for Vivendi's "broader strategy of selling its online entertainment properties." It's much too soon to determine if this suspension is permanent or temporary. So, I've opted to leave the information below regarding MP3's promo auctions intact just in case they should return. By the 2004 edition of this book, I should have a much better picture as to whether MP3.com is still a viable promotion tool for independent music and will update this section accordingly.

About MP3.com Promo Auctions...

One of the interesting features MP3.com offers independent artists are the promo auctions (http://www.mp3.com/auction). Essentially, as a participating artist, you can bid against other artists for the right to have your music displayed in a variety of hot spots throughout the MP3.com web site. Winners may be featured in one of the many MP3.com newsletters, get a highlighted spot on page one of their genre chart listing, or even get placement on the MP3.com search results page. The MP3.com promo auctions are a tool, that when used correctly, can help you create a 'brand' for yourself on MP3.com. I have used them regularly, as has most everyone that has any sustained level of success on MP3.com.

The problem with the promo auctions, however, is that bidding on them can, at times, cost you a whole lot of money. You have to be very careful about how (and against whom) you bid. You also need to be wise about which auctions you actually take part in. Based on my experience, I can tell you that the most effective promo auction, by far, is the *Genre Page Position* auction. In this auction, you bid against other artists for one of three positions on the genre chart playlists. This would be the equivalent to having the #4, #8, or #12 song on the charts for your chosen genre. To put it simply, you are bidding for chart position. If your bid is one of the top three bids, your song gets placed in one of the three positions for a one week period. When visitors to MP3.com listen to the playlists, they automatically hear your songs. The highest bid gets the top position on the playlist, the second-highest, the middle position, and the third-highest is the low man (or woman) on the totem pole. That's the point where bidding in this auction gets risky. In order to win the top position in your genre, you may have to bid a good chunk of cash (actual bid levels vary from week to week). If you manage to win the top position, you'll benefit by seeing a significant spike in your song play stats, and the song you're promoting will zoom up the charts rather quickly giving you a great deal of exposure to MP3.com's visitors. However,

if you bid high for the top position, but lose, you could end up in positions two or three (equivalent to the #8 or #12 song on the charts), which generate *significantly* less traffic. Your song will still go up the charts, but more slowly, and you won't see near the effect on your stats.

In summary, the *Genre Page Promotion* auction is excellent if you can win the top position, but if you don't, you may end up paying too much for the lesser spots. It's a little like playing Russian Roulette. You definitely take your chances.

The remaining MP3.com auctions are a mixed bag. As of this writing, these include the *MP3.com Messenger Promotion,* the *RollingStone.com Promotion,* the *Station Pages Promotions,* the *Payola Promotions,* the *Search Results Promotion* and the *Page Topper Promotion.* In my experience, all of these promotions are highly questionable and in some cases a flat-out waste of money. If you decide to experiment with any of these, be wary.

Of course, my opinions regarding the MP3.com promo auctions are based my own, personal experience when promoting my own music. Your song title, song quality, genre, luck of the draw and many other factors may impact your results, even from one week to the next. You may have more, or less, success than I have. Take the time to do your own research into what promotion options will work best for you and your music! Watch and observe other bidders for several weeks before you begin to participate yourself.

Here are more tips regarding MP3.com promo auctions:

1) Promote one or two of your best songs and keep promoting those same songs over and over. This helps maintain cumulative exposure for those songs. New fans who like those songs will visit your MP3.com artist page (mini-store) to listen to more of your songs.

2) Make your best songs the *first* songs offered for listening at your MP3.com mini-store. As people check out your MP3.com page, they'll start listening to your music at the top and work their way down. By keeping your best songs listed first, you ensure they get the most exposure and the highest chart rankings.

3) In terms of your song play stats, one listen per song per visitor per day counts toward your total. So, use the auctions to promote your songs to different genres. For example, if you promote your pop category song in the *Genre Page* promotion for the Easy Listening genre and win, you then get unique listens from visitors listening to the Easy Listening playlist as well as the Pop & Rock playlist as your song moves up the pop chart. That means that a larger number of listeners hear your song overall, creating more unique listens and more exposure.

The lingering question you may have is, why bother to spend money on the promo auctions just to increase your chart position? Won't you *lose money* doing that? Yes, you might. Much depends on the quality of your music, the instant appeal of your image to visitors, and whether or not enough visitors will buy your retail CDs to help you break even. I know from exchanging e-mails with my own visitors that many of my buyers first heard my music on MP3.com.

All in all, you'll need to spend money on MP3.com to establish a presence there. I remind you again that participating on MP3.com is about *exposure*. In terms of creating opportunities for yourself, making contacts, and gathering e-mail addresses of new fans at a very visible web site, MP3.com is one of the best. You'll have to weigh for yourself whether or not MP3.com promo actions are something you can fit into your advertising budget. If you can't afford to participate in the promo auctions, there are other ways can promote your music at MP3.com...

Fan-Driven Chart Toppers

As your songs gain exposure on MP3.com, more and more people will find you and your music. Many of them will e-mail you from your mini-store to tell you how much they love it. Respond to them, build a relationship and by all means get their e-mail address. Add them to your fan list and e-mail them your newsletter once a month or so. Let them know when you upload new songs to MP3.com and ask for feedback.

One of the cool features of MP3.com is the ability to create digital CDs of your music (including shrink wrap and art design) on the fly. Use the tools MP3.com provides you to create digital versions of your existing albums, new CD compilations, Internet-only CD releases, or even 'best of' or 'b-side' CDs. This will encourage your fans to listen and buy via MP3.com, increasing your song plays and your chart position. The better your chart position, the more fans you'll hear from, and the more CDs you will sell.

But why sell digital CDs from MP3.com? Wouldn't that take away from sales of your retail albums? Well, yes and no. You do, of course, make a bit of profit when you sell digital CDs via MP3.com, though not as much as when you sell your professionally manufactured retail CD. However, when you sell a digitally-based MP3 CD, it gives your songs a boost on the MP3.com charts, and not just one song, but every song on that CD. If you have twelve songs on your album and make a sale, all twelve songs get a chart boost. Sell three CDs and your music goes up the charts that much more. Sell twenty or thirty in a month and you're doing very well. The charts are where most of your song plays are going to come from, and that's where most of your exposure to new listeners is going to be. You've also got to keep making music, because the more songs you have, the more CDs you can offer to your fans on MP3.com, and the more songs you'll have climbing the charts when you make a sale. This is all cumulative, and all contributes to a gradual increase in song plays, CD sales, and exposure.

Now, of course, you still want to sell your retail CDs to your MP3.com visitors, and frankly most people, I find, prefer the retail versions (I know I do). The solution to this conundrum is simple. Give your mini-store visitors a choice: MP3 CD or Retail CD. Again, take a look at my mini-store at http://www.mp3.com/davidnevue to see how I've done this.

MP3.com Stations?

One of other features MP3.com offers is the ability to create and manage your own MP3 'station.' These stations were, at one time, a major feature of MP3.com. However, in recent months MP3.com has been deemphasizing them in favor of its own 'MP3 Radio.' The result is that the station feature doesn't get much through-traffic anymore. Personally, I no longer use them to promote my own music, opting instead to focus my promotional energy on Live365.com (discussed later), where there's a much bigger radio audience.

If you're still interested in checking out the MP3 station feature for yourself, see http://stations.mp3s.com/stations/music/ .

3) **Amazon.com -** (http://www.amazon.com/advantage) **:** Amazon.com is by far the Internet's biggest and most popular store, and they provide a music distribution outlet for independent musicians as well. Amazon.com offers what it calls the "Advantage" program, allowing independent artists to sell their own CDs from the Amazon.com catalog. That means that like MP3.com, your music can be found for sale right alongside commercial, mainstream acts.

Once you sign up for the Advantage service, you submit your CD(s) for review. If they are approved (bar codes on CDs are required), Amazon.com will give you a page (a mini-store) from which you can, to a limited degree, edit your content. You can include your bio, CD descriptions, short editorial reviews and artwork. You

can also assign your music to two browseable categories in Amazon's catalog, meaning you have some limited ability to target Amazon.com visitors browsing a particular genre of music. When Amazon.com's stock of your CD titles get low, they e-mail you to request more, which you must mail to them within 5 business days. Finally, you are paid once per month via an electronic funds transfer directly into your bank account.

The benefits of the Amazon.com Advantage program are obvious: you get to sell your CD on an extremely high traffic web site, one that's flowing with people who have money to spend. Also, your CDs are easy to find for anyone surfing the Internet. Most everyone who shops online knows and trusts Amazon.com, so if someone heard your music somewhere and wants to buy it online but doesn't know about your personal web site, there's a good chance the first place they'll go to search for your music is Amazon.com.

All this being said, there are some disadvantages to the Advantage program. First, there's a $29.95 *annual* fee required to participate. On top of this, Amazon.com takes 55% of your retail price. So if you sell one of your CDs retail for $12.99, your cut is only $5.85. Also, unlike most of the other distribution points reviewed here, you can't create a link directly back to your official web site. Finally, in what I consider the biggest disadvantage, you cannot include sound clips with your product in Amazon's catalog, so customers who happen upon your CDs while shopping at Amazon can't sample your music. **Note:** Amazon.com does provide a "Digital Music Network" for artists to upload their MP3s to, but that network has no relation to your product page other than as a promotional tool to direct traffic to it.

There are ways to *somewhat* overcome these disadvantages. In addition to "Advantage", Amazon.com offers a program called the "Amazon.com Marketplace" (http://www.amazon.com/marketplace). Participation in this program is *much* less expensive than Advantage, in that your cost is only 15% of retail plus .99¢ per sale (as opposed to 55% overall). So, from that same $12.99 CD, your cut is $10.05 (and you have to do your own shipping). But here's the tricky bit: in order to make use of Amazon.com Marketplace program, your product has to *first* be in the Amazon.com store. If you're an independent artist with no official distribution, the only way for that to happen is to sign up for Advantage. So you're back to square one. You have to first sign up for Advantage, pay the annual fee, get your CDs approved and in stock, and *then* sign up for Marketplace. At that point, you'll want to sell your CDs at a discount to encourage people to purchase your CDs direct from you (via Marketplace) rather than from Amazon.com. Even at a discount, you'll make more selling through Marketplace than at full price through Advantage. The only hitch in this scheme is that in my experience people *still* prefer to buy direct from Amazon.com, even though your discounted CDs are available via Marketplace.

Does that all sound confusing? It should, because it is. Amazon's setup is quite convoluted and a bit of a head-scratcher. But let me encourage you to take the time to research your options at Amazon.com. Amazon is one of the *most recognizable brands* on the Internet. So despite the huge percentage they take, despite the confusing setup, it's a place you ought to be stocking your CDs. Music lovers *will* find you there. I make CD sales at Amazon.com almost every day.

If you'd like to see how a completed product page looks, just search for 'David Nevue' at Amazon.com, click on 'See all results...' and you'll see my CDs displayed. Note the 'Used & new' listings beside my CDs. These discounted listings are the additions I've made through the Marketplace system.

Tip: While Amazon.com's product administration system is confusing, its shopping system is quite amazing and very customer-friendly. When you search for an item and view the details for it, Amazon.com will recommend other items to you based on the purchase history of other customers who have bought the same item. You can use this feature to *your* advantage (pun intended). Encourage the folks on your street team (see chapter on *Targeting Your Customers to the Max!*) to purchase some of their favorite CDs at Amazon.com, and while they're at it, buy a copy of your CD as well. This way, your CD registers in Amazon.com's database as having been bought in tandem with other CDs your target audience is likely to search for. As a result,

when targeted visitors at Amazon.com are searching for their favorite artists, there is a chance your CD will be recommended to them.

4) **FaveStreet -** (http://music.favestreet.com) **:** FaveStreet is the newest addition to my list, and I'm very excited about they have to offer independent musicians. Rather than a single entity, FAVE (Faith and Values Entertainment) is actually a large network of online music stores. In fact, when you join, you get your *own* FaveStreet store with your own web address. So, unlike the other 'mini-stores' listed here, rather than getting just a web page to promote your music, you get an entire store full of products, including CD releases by major label artists.

Here's where things get really cool: once you have your product in the FAVE catalog, you encourage your fans to purchase your CDs from your store. Then, not only do you make money when they buy *your* CDs, but you earn a 33.4% (of profit) commission on any other CD they purchase in your store as well. So if a fan buys your CD as well as the latest from Shania Twain, Norah Jones, or U2, you get paid for *all* those sales.

Think this through for a moment. Your fans currently support you financially when they buy your new CD. But what happens after that? When's the next time you receive *any* money from them (other than at a show)? Probably not until your next CD is released. However, if you have your own CD store, you can encourage your fans to buy ALL their music from you, meaning they support you financially on an *ongoing* basis.

Another cool thing about FaveStreet is that they reward (and encourage) success. If your CD sells well in your own store, FAVE begins featuring your music in *other* FaveStreet member stores. If your CD does well there, you're moved into the national network. Finally, if you continue to sell consistently, FaveStreet takes your CD release and moves it into the retail market. Your 'Independent' CD goes for sale in places like Wal-Mart. The FaveStreet system is designed to reward Independent musicians for success. If your CD proves itself, you can advance within the system to a place where you have retail distribution in place.

FaveStreet is quietly making waves, even with some established artists. If you check out the store (music.favestreet.com) , you'll see a number of artists whose names you might recognize who are already partners with FAVE.

The cost for all this? Nothing. Well, not up front anyway. FaveStreet makes a big deal of the fact that you'll never receive a bill from them, nor will they ever ask for your credit card. You only pay a small fee to cover the expense of maintaining your store on the back end *after* you've made a sale. In terms of what you *receive* from FaveStreet when you sell a CD, it works out to about $8-9 per unit depending on the retail price you set. By the way, there's no exclusivity with FAVE, and no term commitment.

I just recently signed with FAVE myself to get familiar with how it works. I've placed a detailed overview of the system at http://www.musicdistribution.com . If FaveStreet sounds interesting to you, check it out.

5) **SHOUTcast.com** - (http://www.shoutcast.com) **:** SHOUTcast is the hub for a huge network of Internet radio stations and broadcasters. Each and every month, SHOUTcast logs over 22 million broadcast hours - that's four times more than the next largest broadcaster consolidation service, Clear Channel. The great thing about SHOUTcast is that at your fingertips you have immediate access to some of the most listened to radio stations on the Internet. So to promote your music via SHOUTcast, browse the service for the most popular stations in your genre, visit the station web sites, and research how and if you can submit your music for consideration.

Many SHOUTcast stations play only commercial music, but some will include music from independent artists as well. For example, Radiostorm.com (http://www.radiostorm.com/), a SHOUTcast broadcaster, offers

promotional packages specifically tailored to independent artists. Radiostorm claims to be the largest independent radio network on the Internet, with over 3 million listeners per month. Promotional packages start at $25 for one spin per day for a week, where your single will be heard by (on average) 20,000 people, who can click a text link to visit your web site. Radiostorm's promotional packages go all the way up to $500, which buys you four spins a day for a month with a 125x125 image, a text link, and a "buy" button next to your song.

Start with Radiostorm, and use SHOUTcast to find other, similar stations that will help you promote your music to the listening public. If your music is well-targeted and catches the listener's attention, you should see some sales from this effort, as well as some traffic to your official site.

6) **Live365.com** - (http://www.live365.com) **:** According to Arbitron, whose core business is measuring radio audiences across the U.S., Live365.com is the Internet's largest radio broadcasting network. Live365.com logs an average of three million unique visitors, and 9.7 million listener hours per month.

As with SHOUTcast, you can find any number of broadcast stations, many of which are set up by individuals, who will consider your music. The top Indie Rock station, ModernRock.com, for example, logged over 33,000 listening hours in July 2003 and will promote unsigned bands - and that's just one of 627 stations (as of this writing) which classify themselves at Live365 as "Indie Rock." Find those stations that are popular in your genre and drop them a line. You have an open door to getting some Internet radio play here which may in turn, lead to more sales of your CDs. Speaking of which, Live365.com is hooked directly into Amazon.com. So, if you're selling CDs at Amazon, when someone clicks on 'Buy' at a Live365 station, they'll be taken right to Amazon.com where they can purchase your CD.

Both SHOUTcast and Live365.com provide you with tools to set up and run your own broadcast station if you wish. With SHOUTcast, you need your own server from which to broadcast your music. With Live365.com, however, you can host your music directly on Live365.com's servers, so all you need to do is create and upload your MP3 files. Costs start as $7.45 per month for a very basic station. If you have a big enough budget, you can run a PRO station where you set up your own "Buy" buttons and feed your own banner ads.

See *How to Broadcast* at http://www.live365.com/help/broadcast/index.html for information on how to set up your own Live365 station.

7) **Cornerband.com -** (http://www.cornerband.com) **:** If you've done any file trading on the Internet, more than likely you are familiar with Kazaa Media Desktop, the most popular desktop file sharing utility in the world. Over 250 million people (and counting) have downloaded this software and use it to search for, trade, and burn music by countless popular artists. I have seen estimates that at any given time, 3 million people are using the software.

How would you like to get your music onto the Kazaa network and use it as a means to promote, distribute and sell your music? How cool would it be if, when someone searched Kazaa for a popular artist such as the Dave Matthews Band (or any other artist whose music is similar to yours), your song was recommended to them? What if every time a Kazaa user listened to your song, a window popped up with information about you and a link to your online store where they could buy your CD? Even better, what if you could specify the number of days a Kazaa user could sample your music before having to pay to hear more?

This is all stuff you can do by signing up with Cornerband.com. Cornerband is the exclusive, official provider of independent music content to the Kazaa Media Desktop network. As a member, you have complete control over the distribution and security of your song files. You can upload your files in MP3 or WMA format, prevent users from burning your songs, set the songs to time out after a certain number of listens and associate your songs with a variety of keywords such as "hip-hop" or popular artist names.

There is, of course, a fee to distribute your music on Kazaa. You can distribute one song for $34.99, five songs for $99.99, or up to twelve songs for $199.99. Those are *annual* fees.

Other benefits of Cornerband include the ability to create streaming radio stations of your music, which you can link to directly from your official artist site (I prefer using Live365.com to do this). You can also link from Cornerband to your official site, upload your photo and tour dates, create a band profile and view song statistics. Customers can purchase your CDs direct through Cornerband or Kazaa if you like, which are hooked directly into the CDStreet.com shopping cart system (details on CDStreet below).

The Cornerband/Kazaa opportunity is relatively new, but exciting. Cornerband offers some incredible opportunities for targeting new customers searching for music related to yours on the Internet.

8) **CDStreet.com -** (http://www.cdstreet.com) **:** CDStreet offers what are, in my opinion, some of the most attractive 'mini-store' artist pages available on a third-party web site. The look is snazzy, though perhaps a bit crowded, but is highly energetic and just plain fun to navigate. In addition to the fabulous design, CDStreet boasts some pretty powerful clients. These include Chick Corea, Sara Groves, Prince, Stephen Bishop, the Mighty Mighty Bosstones and others.

CDStreet has some great features to offer artists. Visitors can rate your music, post reviews, get news and information (that you've posted), and listen to and purchase your music. In addition, CDStreet offers Soundscan reporting for sales, CD warehousing and fulfillment, and if you want, you can use them as your 'credit card' processor simply by adding a "Buy" button to your web site. They even have a program where you can accept credit cards at gigs using their remote terminal.

As with MP3.com, you can purchase promo ads to run throughout the CDStreet web site to promote your product. These ads appear on genre page sidebars, at the top of pages, and even on the CDStreet homepage. Unlike MP3.com, however, these are not promo auctions you are bidding for. You purchase these ad placements straight-out in two-month increments, and they are considerably less expensive than at MP3.com. Of course, CDStreet doesn't have the traffic volume MP3.com does, and therein lies some of the difference. Still, for November 2002, CDStreet logged approximately 6.5 million page views. That's nothing to sneeze at.

CDStreet recently overhauled their sign-up fees into a rather complex payment system. Your setup fee varies, ranging from $19.99-$29.99 per item depending on how many CDs you have to add to their catalog. Also, the percentage of your sale CDStreet keeps for servicing your CD varies depending upon the service plan you choose. For most artists, that will be "Plan 4", in which CDStreet keeps 35%. However, if you expect to sell a *lot* of CDs, you can upgrade to plans wherein CDStreet takes a smaller percentage, but charges you an additional service fee.

My chief complaint about CDStreet is their 'mini-store' admin tool which is not at all intuitive. Also, I've had a very difficult time receiving support of late, with unanswered e-mails for weeks over issues of payment. Of course, in that regard I can only speak to my own experience. I have no idea whether this is just me, or whether everyone is experiencing this.

Overall, I recommend CDStreet with *caution*. It's a *great* place to host your music, but I'm unsure of the level of support you can expect to receive.

9) **GarageBand** - (http://www.garageband.com) **:** If you're a member of great band, and I mean a *great* band, GarageBand might be able to get you some fantastic exposure. Supported by such well known producers as George Martin (The Beatles) and Jerry Harrison (Talking Heads), GarageBand puts the success of member artists (membership is free) in the hands of music fans and listeners.

GarageBand invites musicians to submit their music to the site, where it will be reviewed and rated by listeners, loyal users, and other musicians. The review process, which involves a "comparative ranking algorithm," is designed to eliminate bias. Songs that receive the highest ratings by listeners climb the GarageBand charts. It's as simple as that. If your song does well, you may have the opportunity to have your song included on a GarageBand 'Evolved' sampler CD, which goes out to subscribers every three months. The highest rated songs also get radio play on Yahoo's LAUNCHcast station (http://radio.yahoo.com), and are included on Yahoo's playlist right alongside popular artists. Finally, your song, if highly rated, gets exposure to GarageBand's advisory board of music industry professionals.

GarageBand has received some major attention in the industry. 26 GarageBand members were finalists in the New Music category for the 2003 American Music Awards, and the final winner performed live during the awards show on January 13th, 2003. Twelve GarageBand artists have been signed to major label deals.

In addition to the exposure opportunities inherent in the system, you receive constant feedback on your songs from objective reviewers, your own GarageBand.com artist page, free gig promotion to fans, and you can sell your CDs (the GarageBand shopping cart is provided by CD Baby) directly from the site.

GarageBand has the backing and support most independent web sites only dream of. A definite must for serious musicians seeking the opportunity to be heard.

10) **MusicCity.com -** (http://www.musiccity.com/) **:** MusicCity.com is a portal site created by StreamCast (http://www.streamcastnetworks.com) designed to "level the playing field for musicians to help them distribute their content to the world." This is accomplished through their peer-to-peer file-sharing application called Morpheus. Morpheus works much like the Kazaa file sharing network mentioned earlier, though it isn't quite as popular. According to the latest figures provided by StreamCast (May 2003), Morpheus serves 1,000,000 simultaneous users at any given time.

Much like Cornerband allows you to distribute your music through Kazaa, MusicCity.com offers independent artists the opportunity to distribute through Morpheus. Once you sign up and submit your music, your pictures, bio, and links will be included, along with your music, in a secure file-wrapper called 'CintoA.' This file-wrapper is a security measure that allows you to control how many times a listener can preview and/or download your music from the network before they are prompted to purchase it. Once the wrapper is complete, your song (or album) will be placed on the MusicCity servers and from there propagated into the Morpheus P2P network where millions of users can download, listen to, and have the opportunity to buy your music. Participating artists are also featured at the MusicCity.com home page. Current participants include Five-time Grammy nominee Thomas Dolby.

Unlike Cornerband, you're not just selling your physical album. You can also sell your music files as permanent digital music downloads, giving paying customers the option of burning your album straight from the network. MusicCity recommends you sell your digital 'singles' for .99¢, and 'albums' (up to twelve songs) for $8. You keep 70% of the gross from sales, and checks are sent out monthly. MusicCity.com also has a partnership with CD Baby, so you have the option of sending people directly to CD Baby to purchase your retail CDs. You can also, if you'd rather, link to your official web site.

Compared to Cornerband.com, MusicCity.com's feature set is a bit slim. You cannot, for example, tie your music to selected keywords to target customers searching the network. MusicCity is also much more expensive to participate in. The cost for artists to include their music on the Morpheus network is $125 per song, or $495 for an entire album of songs (up to 12 songs).

When all is said and done, however, the distribution potential of Morpheus may be too large to ignore. The MusicCity.com opportunity is tantalizing, though if your budget is limited, I recommend waiting until the technology matures before investing heavily in it.

Beyond the Top Ten....

Here are a few other exposure points that didn't make my top ten, but still merit looking into.

SoundClick - (http://www.soundclick.com) **:** SoundClick services both signed & unsigned artists, and features a detailed song charting system with songs ranked by both number of song plays and listener ratings. SoundClick is completely free, and offers unlimited web space for artists (for streaming MP3s), as well as artist message boards, a mailing list and other features. SoundClick isn't really a place to *sell* your music as much as to showcase it and drive traffic to your official web site. All in all, SoundClick is a very friendly place, and it boasts over 1 million unique visitors per month.

Muze - (http://www.muze.com) **:** Muze provides music content for over 250 online retailers. The web site is rather vague, but you can send your CD in to have it listed in their database - meaning buyers can order your music through outlets like Borders, E!, Sam Goody, Tower and others. Cost: E-mail from site for details. Contact via form at http://www.muze.com/contact.html

Ampcast.com - (http://www.ampcast.com) **:** Membership at Ampcast is $95 a year. That fee includes participation in their digital CD program, which allows you to create digital CDs for your visitors. Ampcast takes only $1 profit on each CD (over cost) and you get whatever is left. You can also sell individual song downloads, of which Ampcast takes 50%. Ampcast offers members their own web page, a one-off CD program (create and sell 'retail ready' CDs with no up-front costs), short-run CD packages and more. All told, Ampcast offers some very nice services for musicians.

Vitaminic.com - (http://www.vitaminic.com) **:** This famous European music site features music from established and unsigned bands alike. Vitaminic offers two programs for artists. The first is free, but gets you nothing more than a 'home page' from which you can make up to 25 tracks available for download. The second is their "Premium Service," which costs $60 per year ($5 per month). As a member of the Premium Service, you can sell downloads and/or digital CDs of your music from your Vitaminic mini-store. Vitaminic splits the profit with you - they take 50%. The best thing about Vitaminic is that they have over 40 music syndication agreements in place with web services like Yahoo and AltaVista, so the music of paying members can be heard far beyond the Vitaminic web site. Vitaminic also owns peoplesound.com (http://www.peoplesound.com), so when you sign up for Vitaminic, you're automatically included there.

SoundBuzz - (http://www.soundbuzz.com) **:** SoundBuzz offers targeted digital music distribution to the Asian markets - via MSN, Lycos, wireless means (Nokia), and OEM partners (HP). Cost: Free to use, takes 50% net revenues on any sales that might come from your music.

BeSonic - (http://www.besonic.com) **:** Based in Europe, BeSonic boasts over 20,000 artist members. Visitors can search by "mood," "taste," or "sounds like" mode. They can also sit back and enjoy BeSonic "Mood Radio." Cost: Both free (with limitations) and "Premium Artist" (pay) options are available. Premium artists receive additional promotional and placement benefits.

Sonic Garden - (http://www.sonicgarden.com) **:** In terms of design, Sonic Garden is one of the more impressive places to host and distribute your music. Plus, every single aspect of Sonic Garden is free for artists. That includes not only your 'mini-store,' which includes a mailing list, bio, link to your web site, news and tour info, but also inclusion in their radio, TV, and soundtrack programs. Like SoundClick, Sonic Garden isn't a place to sell your music so much as it is to showcase it and drive people to your official web site.

90

Audio Kingdom - http://www.audiokingdom.com/ **:**
Looking for a way to take credit cards and sell your CDs from your own web site without a merchant account or paying monthly fees? Check out what Audio Kingdom has to offer. You get a storefront customized to the look and feel of your web site which allows you to sell your CDs, as well as MP3 singles from those CDs. Your visitors can also preview your music before they buy and post album reviews. You can sell t-shirts and other merchandise, take payments via Visa, MC, money order, check, or PayPal, AND accept payments via a toll free 800 number. Once you're set up at AudioKingdom, you insert a single line of HTML on your web site and your storefront is up and running. The cost for all this? Audio Kingdom takes 25% of your sales - you get the rest. No setup fee!

1Sound.com - (http://www.1sound.com/) **:** 1Sound was founded by Rod Underhill, who also founded MP3.com. Once your music has been accepted, you will receive a free artist page (with up to six songs) and the opportunity to have your music included in the 1Sound.com webcast. 1Sound.com has been "getting off the ground" for some time now.

IUMA - (http://www.iuma.com) **:** IUMA is one of the oldest and most respected musician communities on the web. It still enjoys a small level of traffic, and this list just wouldn't be complete without it. Upload songs, bio, photos, tour dates and artwork. Create message boards, fan lists, and more. Now owned by Vitaminic.com. Cost: Free.

StarPolish - (http://www.starpolish.com) **:** At StarPolish, receive unprecedented artist support through forums, advice columns, articles, industry and artist interviews and more. Great artist pages, very classy look, industry-recognized forum. Cost: Free to join, 20% of CD Sales.

The Orchard - (http://www.theorchard.com) **:** I include the Orchard here for one reason - to warn you. Although very well known, they have a *terrible* reputation with independent artists. I have very rarely heard anything positive about them. Be very careful.

Time spent promoting your music to these web sites and services will increase your online exposure greatly, bringing in that many more CD and music sales. If you can get your music on all of these, well, that would be an impressive feat! As you can imagine, getting involved with each and every one of these web services will take considerable effort. Just start at the top of the list and work your way down as you have time. Those I consider the most important are listed first.

Selling CDs Online:
A Three-Pronged Approach

Treading Familiar Ground

Early in 2002, I posted the following article at The Music Biz Academy (http://www.musicbizacademy.com). The article fits very well into the context of this book, and I thought it appropriate to include here before continuing on. It summarizes, in essence, the main thrust of this book, though in much less detail. It serves as a nice, simplified review. I've included a few notes in parentheses for reference.

A Three-Pronged Approach

Recently, a visitor to the Music Biz Academy asked me a very common question; "How can I sell more CDs on the Internet?" Good question, though very open-ended. How you go about marketing your music successfully depends on a great many factors. This article contains some basic suggestions on where to start.

I recommend musicians take a three-pronged approach to selling their music on the Internet. The first 'prong' is what I call 'targeting with buzz.' That is, you create a buzz about your music and get people talking about it. To do that, however, you need to promote your music where people are already searching for new music to listen to. That is, instead of trying to bring people to you (or your web site), you go to where the people are already hanging out. Go where the action is, so to speak. So, where's that?

Targeting With Buzz

The first place I recommend any musician start promoting their music is MP3.com. Though some independent musicians feel MP3.com has sold out (actually, they literally have) to the commercial record industry, the fact is, for pure exposure it's the place to be. MP3.com is a huge magnet for music-loving traffic. Perform a search at Google for "music" and MP3.com is the #2 site listed. Search for "mp3" and it's the #1 site. You just can't find a better place to put your music right in the path of cyber-traffic. With proper promotion, you'll have hundreds, even thousands of new people listening to your music every day. For example, for January 2002, I was able to generate over 50,000 plays of my songs. That exposure resulted in more CD sales, lots of e-mail from new fans, and more importantly, name recognition. Once you've mastered MP3.com, you can start setting up shop at other, similar sites such as GarageBand.com, CornerBand.com, CDStreet.com, CDBaby.com and others (see last chapter).

Targeting by Site

The second 'prong' to increasing CD sales on the Net is what I call 'targeting by site.' With this option, your objective is to create a web site that targets the people *most likely* to be interested in your music. The question to ask yourself is, "what are the people who are most likely to buy my music searching for on the Internet?" Once you have that answer, design a web site around that particular topic. Then, optimize and submit your web site to the search engines using tried and true web site marketing techniques. In this scenario, you don't focus on promoting your music per sé, you focus on promoting the general topic of the web site (see the *Optimizing Your Site for Search Engines - A Step-By-Step Guide* chapter for search engine promotion tips).

Then, since your web site is attracting visitors who tend to enjoy your style of music, advertise your music on this targeted web site, marketing directly to those visitors (See chapter entitled *Targeting Your Customers to the Max!* for more details).

Make It 'Official'

The final 'prong' is where you will create long-term fans: your own 'official' artist web site. This personal web site is the place where you will provide your fans with complete details about your act. You'll include song lyrics, the latest news, CD info, pictures, a discussion board, chat room, sheet music, whatever you can think of. Your official site is the place you will drive traffic to from prong #1 and prong #2. It's where, ultimately, long-term fans (and friends) are made. Here's a tip: if you have more than one CD, sell them in bulk. Give your visitors the opportunity to buy more for less. I currently have 5 CDs, and give my visitors the option of buying all 5 CDs for $50. Guess what? A good portion of my orders from new customers are for the entire collection. So, if you haven't yet purchased a domain name (a web site address) for your act, do so now, and start thinking about setting up your own web site. I recommend purchasing your domain name from DirectNic.com, who will supply you with registration and other great features for just $15/year.

Summing It Up

All three of these prongs work together. The first (targeting with buzz) not only sells CDs, it creates buzz, name recognition, and career opportunities where none were before. My time on MP3.com has directly resulted in song licensing opportunities, as well as a distribution deal with a Korean record company. The second method (targeting by site) allows you to target visitors who have a predisposition to your style of music. Maybe they didn't search the Internet looking to find new music, but as a result of their search they did discover you, and with some keen marketing strategies you can gradually, over time, turn some of these casual visitors into fans. Finally, the third prong is where you keep them coming back, your own, official web site. There, long-term fans are made. Think of prong #1 and #2 as a funnel that channels your visitors to prong #3.

I'm sure you're thinking this is a lot of work. You're right, it is, and it's only the beginning. There's a lot involved in marketing and selling your music online - much more than I can go into in this short article. But, hopefully this will whet your appetite and inspire some creative thinking. If your music is truly good music, music that catches the heart and ear of listeners, there is a cyber-world of opportunity waiting for you.

Dead Ends, Money Pits, and Time Wasters!

Marketing Strategies That Fall Flat!

I've spent a good portion of this book telling you how to successfully promote, market and sell your music on the Internet. But what about those ideas that simply don't work well? What follows are marketing strategies I've experimented with that ended up being a waste of time, money and energy. Although it's possible you may have better results with these strategies than I did, I recommend you approach each of these with caution.

Banner Ads and Banner Exchange Services

One of the most popular means of advertising on the Internet is through the use of banner ads. Banner advertising can be expensive to purchase, which makes their use as an advertising medium very limited for most musicians. Not only that, but generally speaking, they don't work. According to most estimates, the average banner ad has about a .005% click-through ratio. That means that 1 out of 200 people who see a banner might click on it. Based on that ratio, if you were purchase 10,000 banner exposures for $50, 50 people might click on your ad. That means you're paying $1.00 per click. Of those 50, how many will buy your music? Very, very few, if any. Paying for banner advertising is, simply put, a waste of money in most cases.

So what about so-called 'free' banner ad exchange services? As you roam the Internet, you may come across free banner exchange programs that offer to display your banner on their network of sites in exchange for your displaying their own banners on your site. Often this is a two for one deal… for every two banners displayed on your site, your banner is displayed once on another site.

In my experience, using banner exchange services like these can actually hurt you. Typically, a banner service will encourage you to put as many ad banners as possible on your site, increasing the number of times your own banner is displayed on their network. That sounds all right, except that first of all, you're not actually making any money, and secondly, you're annoying your visitors with pointless, untargeted ads they are not the least bit interested in.

If you are going to have banner ads on your web site, the least you should do is make money displaying them. How? Create and display your own banners on your site, banners that advertise your own products to your specific targeted audience. That way you're not losing money, and you're not throwing away valuable advertising space. Another option is to find banner programs that will pay you for your ad space. In the next chapter, which discusses affiliate programs and partnerships, I will cover this option in detail.

TIP: The banners with the most effective click rate are those which are designed to look like part of the site. They will appear as interactive objects, containing drop down boxes, radio buttons, or most commonly, search fields. These generally get a 2-3% click-through rate. So, if you decide to design your own banner, design it as an interactive tool your visitors will click on. For banner creation ideas, check out the excellent design work of GW Web Design at http://gwwebdesign.com .

E-mail (Spam) Services

Once you're on the Internet and have an e-mail address, it won't be long before you receive solicitations from companies wanting to sell you their e-mail advertising services for the purposes of spamming potential clients.

They provide you the opportunity to e-mail site information, advertisements, or press releases to perhaps a million e-mail addresses at the same time. Sometimes, they even claim to offer targeted e-mail advertising. My advice? Don't do it. Again it's a waste of money, not to mention the fact that people simply hate receiving unsolicited e-mail advertisements. Spam generates more ill will than just about anything else on the planet, and it will reflect negatively on you as a business.

According to an article by Paul Fuhrmeister, the Vice President of CommerceStreet.com....

9.2% of the U.S. Internet population reads spam. Of that percentage, the numbers fall into three categories:

13.1% of novice (online < 6 months) Internet users read spam
8.2% of intermediate (online 6 months - 3 years) Internet users read spam
5.4% of expert (online > 3 years) Internet users read spam

But for all of those who read unsolicited e-mail, even more 'reply negatively' and some 'retaliate.' A negative reply is a return message that may be interpreted to mean "take me off your list." Retaliatory responses take many forms, including returning the message a number of times (sometimes hundreds of times using auto-mailer programs) or complaining to the sender's service provider. Negative replies and retaliations are a serious problem for spammers.

Here are a few more statistics from the article:

9.2 % of the U.S. Internet population reads spam, 12% reply negatively, and 1.5% retaliate:

13.1% of novice (online < 6 months) Internet users read spam, 10% reply negatively, and 0.5% retaliate
8.2% of intermediate (online 6 months - 3 years) Internet users read spam, 11.8% reply negatively, and 2% retaliate
5.4% of expert (online > 3 years) Internet users read spam, 14.5% reply negatively, and 3.6% retaliate

So, based on those statistics, if you send out 100 unsolicited e-mails, 9 people will read it, 12 will reply negatively, and at least one person will retaliate. So, for that list of 1,000,000 e-mail names you've been offered, 90,000 (9%) will read your message, but you'll get 120,000 negative replies and 15,000 experienced Internet users who want to teach you a lesson. Ouch!

Save yourself a headache. Keep your business spam-free.

Free-for-All Links

Late 1997 saw the rise of an advertising technique commonly known as 'Free-for-All' links. Essentially, a free-for-all (FFA) link is nothing more than a single huge page of links to which you can add yours. These services have pretty much been abandoned today, though you do still run across them on occasion. While FFA link pages can generate a small amount of traffic, there are some serious drawbacks:

1. It takes a long time to post to enough of them to make your traffic increase meaningful. A FFA link submission may generate one to three hits per week. You'd have to submit to a large number of these sites to see any real difference.

2. Your submission to an FFA page only works for about a week. The newer postings push you further down the list until the link completely stops working for you.

3. Generally speaking, there is no way to truly target your audience. You are counting on the slight possibility that the right person will happen along and select your link. Of those that select your link, what percentage do you suppose are really interested in your product? Think about it. When you go to an FFA link page, what links do you select? Those that pique your curiosity, right? But are you a serious customer? Probably not.

4. More and more FFA pages are being populated by FFA submission bots. In other words, fewer people are actually spending time at FFA sites. They're just using FFA submission bots to add their own site to the link list.

5. If you submit your site to an FFA links page, you'll get spammed big time.

While FFAs might be a marginal way to build a small amount of traffic, it's not the right kind of traffic. Plus posting to enough FFA sites to make the return worth it is just too much work and the results are short-lived. The disadvantages far outweigh the advantages.

Newsgroups

I've talked a bit about newsgroups already in this book (See *Targeting Your Customers to the Max*). A newsgroup is a discussion area where a specific topic is addressed. There are newsgroups dedicated to television shows, films, books, politics - anything you can think of. There is an ever-growing list of Internet newsgroups for music-related topics. These range from discussions about bands or artists, to sites dedicated to musicians, or music as an art form.

Here is a sample of music-related newsgroups:

alt.music	alt.music.independent	alt.music.mp3	alt.rock-n-roll
alt.rock-n-roll.metal	alt.rock-n-roll.hard	ba.music	rec.music.ambient
rec.music.celtic	rec.music.christian	rec.music.compose	rec.music.folk
rec.music.funky	rec.music.hiphop	rec.music.makers	rec.music.misc
rec.music.newage			

To view a newsgroup you will need a newsreader. Both Netscape and Internet Explorer come with pre-installed newsreaders you can use, but other client-based and web-based options such as Google's group reader (http://groups.google.com/), which I recommend, are available and easier to use.

Newsgroups are not really the best venue for mass-marketing your CDs and/or other music merchandise. Nonetheless, there are a couple of ways you can try to use newsgroups to your advantage. The best use of your time is to find a group where your style of music would be of interest to the regular readers. If you are a piano player for example, find a newsgroup (like rec.music.makers.piano) where topics center around piano playing. Establish yourself as a reliable source of information on piano technique, supplies, care, advice, whatever. If you post messages frequently, using your signature with your web address on all correspondences, over time you may be able to establish yourself as an expert in your field within that discussion group. People reading your messages will see your signature and visit your web site. In the right newsgroups you can make somewhat of a name for yourself and at the very least become a familiar 'face' to other regular forum visitors. This may help promote some goodwill for your business.

Although I encourage you to take part in newsgroup discussions (or, get your street team involved), blatantly marketing your music is not a good idea. In other words, you may be tempted to post messages that outright advertise your new CD. You may wonder what would happen if you posted an advertisement for your CD to all the major music newsgroups. Would you get a lot of visitors to your web site? Would you sell a lot of CDs? The answer in short is no. Sure, you can post a message describing your music and advertising your site, and

you may get a few visits, but chances are you will receive very few, if any, serious inquiries. On the contrary, this kind of mass solicitation is, again, considered spam and rather than getting inquiries about your CD, you may find you are spammed back. In fact, if you post ANY message to a newsgroup, be warned that your e-mail address will be collected and you will begin to receive spam via e-mail. This is a really nasty side effect of posting anything to the newsgroups.

In the end, newsgroups are a mixed bag. If you have the time to take serious part in a newsgroup community and post messages on a regular basis, you might find you get a few inquiries about your music. If, however, you wish to use the newsgroups as an Internet billboard to post ads about your great new CD or other music-related merchandise, you will probably be disappointed in the results.

Music Collaborations

Every once in a while, I'm approached by a company, web site or service selling 'collaborative' opportunities for my music. Often these have an "we're all in this together" mentality and really push the idea of working in tandem to promote a web site and the music of all individuals involved. It's a really nice sentiment, but I've rarely seen anything come of these kind of collaborations.

Many services like these offer - for a price - to include your music on CD samplers, which are touted as a promotional benefit. Some claim to send samplers off to radio stations or to market their clients to record companies. All I can say about these kind of claims is just "be smart." If a service asks you to contribute financially to have your music included in a CD sampler project, you'd better find out exactly what you're getting for your investment. Don't be steamrolled by pretty sounding, but vague promises. It's all too easy to contribute several hundred dollars to a project only to see zero return. Find out *exactly* how the service plans on targeting their sampler. If they target their audience well, the sampler *might* be good exposure. If the sampler goes out to a random audience, randomly to college radio stations or handed out indiscriminately at showcases or industry gatherings, it's probably not a wise investment.

One thing to note is that many of these collaborative-based services are actually run by independent musicians like yourself who are trying to make a few extra bucks designing and hosting web pages for other musicians. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but if your desire is to simply have a web page on the Internet and not bother with anything else, just sign up with CDBaby, CDStreet, or one of the other distribution points I mentioned previously. You'll get a lot more traffic that way, and probably a better looking web site.

All that being said, if you are *serious* about promoting your music on the Internet, and making money while you're at it, you really will need your very own personal artist site. If you plan to have any future marketing your music online, sooner or later you're going to have to take the step of having your own official web site. Rather than waiting until "I get around to it" to get that work done, get it set up now. The sooner it's done and submitted to the search engines, the higher ranking you are going to have in the years to come when you start building a following. Unlike some employment situations, seniority does matter to the search engines. Older web sites tend to rank better than new web sites.

Joint Sampler Projects

What about soliciting other independent musicians to create a joint CD sampler project of your own? Have you ever thought about it? Everyone pitches in, splits the costs, and you all benefit from the sales and promotion. Sounds promising, doesn't it? But consider this: of the CDs you receive from bands or musicians who wish to be involved in your sampler project, how many of those are going to contain the quality of music you want to promote? If the music isn't up to your standard, how will you handle turning someone down? Since it's a joint CD project, how do you ensure that your participants pay their fair share? What are you going to do to ensure

each participant feels like they got their money's worth? How will you handle a disgruntled participant who contributes $300 to the project, then decides you didn't do enough to promote his or her music? These are just a few of the questions you must consider.

Before you begin soliciting artists to create a collaborative sampler of your own, I suggest you find a sampler project already in progress that you yourself can participate in. That will give you a bit of experience in such a project before taking one on yourself. How do you find the right project to be involved with? You can often judge the success of a sampler by the number of previous samplers the company has done. After all, if the sponsor has released several sampler projects successfully, they can draw from that experience.

You can also judge the market for a web site's sampler to some degree by the popularity of the web site sponsoring the sampler. If the site is getting a lot of traffic, press, and attention in the media, then perhaps contributing to that sampler project is not such a bad idea. At the very least, you will gain some useful knowledge about the business of putting a sampler together. Plus, in the end, it will likely cost you less than trying to sponsor a collaborative sampler project of your own. The experience may also provide you with ideas on how to sponsor your own sampler project, if you feel that is something you still want to do.

Sponsoring a joint sampler project of your own is a big step, one which involves bringing people you don't know into your business. That's not something to take lightly. If you decide to move forward, write up a formal contract that all participants will sign so that you can protect yourself. In this contract you must describe in detail exactly what you do (and don't) plan to do with the sampler. It's not so much that I want to discourage you from starting a collaborative sampler as it is that I want to encourage you to be fully prepared to handle the responsibility involved. A poorly-managed sampler project can be a crushing blow to the reputation of your web site. If you're going to do it, be prepared to take the time to do it right!

Ultimately, you must ask yourself this question: will this collaborative sampler help you promote *your* music? The project will take up a lot of your time and financial resources. You'd better be sure you're investing your time and energy in something which will help move your career forward, not cause it to stall. Otherwise, you may find you're getting bogged down creating the sampler while you put your own career plans on hold.

How to Use Advertising to Pump Cash Into Your Music Career!

Secrets to Creating Cash With Advertising and Affiliate Programs!

Bonus Checks for Great Performance!

During the last three years I have spent a great deal of time experimenting with on-site advertising and affiliate programs. I have some great news to report - there's money to be made! Online companies are looking for successful web sites to advertise on, and once you've reached 100,000 page views per month you can begin making some serious money selling advertising on your web site. How much money? Just one of my affiliate programs is bringing in over $1500 per month on a regular basis. Banner advertising is bringing in $200 more, and other miscellaneous programs bring in another $1000 or so a month. All this for doing very little work once it's set up. That extra 2.5K+ a month goes a long way toward reinvesting in my online business and music career.

This brief, but powerful chapter is here to give you some insight into how to make your ad space work for you. These tips are, generally speaking, intended to be applied to the topical web site you create to target your particular audience. Most of the ideas here are not something you'll want to implement on your personal artist site since once you have a visitor there, you don't want them going anywhere else.

Less is More

You may recall my advice to limit your visitors' options. This should also be applied to any advertising or ad placement you do. The more advertising you run on your targeted web site, the less likely your customer is to pay any attention to it, and the less likely they are to notice your CD and product promotions which are the most important of all. Remember your web site must look professional, no matter what! You don't want to irritate your visitor by giving the impression your site is just one big advertisement! If your visitor can't find the information they want without having to wade through a sea of adverts, they'll never come back. Trust me on this.

I recommend you find somewhere between two and four different types of programs to advertise. These may include banner ads, search tools, pay-per-click or commission-based affiliate programs. Use only as many as you feel you can get away with without cluttering up your site or confusing your visitor. Be objective on this! If you can't be objective, ask your fans on your street team take a look at your web site and give you their honest opinion.

Pay-per-Click, Thousand, or Commission?

There are essentially three types of affiliate or banner programs: those that pay-per-click (generally referred to as CPC); those that pay-per-thousand impressions (CPM); and commission-based programs.

Pay-per-click (better known as CPC) programs are the ones most advertisers go after. This is, of course, because they don't have to pay you a thing unless someone actually clicks on their banner or link. Typically, these will pay anywhere from .01-.15 cents per click. As you can imagine, it takes a while to generate much

revenue when dealing with such small numbers. Most small affiliate programs are CPC programs and many banner advertising agencies use CPC as well. I have found that generally speaking, CPC are the least effective advertising campaigns to run. They are also the most common programs available, which makes finding a productive one difficult.

Pay-per-thousand (CPM) programs are much less common, but are the most effective for raising revenue. These are fantastic programs for any web site doing significant traffic because your payment is based on how many thousands of visitors you have, not how many clicks are registered. So as long as you keep the traffic coming in, you're set. Some banner advertising agencies use CPM programs, or a mix of CPM and CPC banners to give you the benefit of both. I'll discuss banner advertising in detail in just a moment.

Commission-based programs are also popular on the Net, but their success depends entirely upon whether or not the products you offer are of interest to your visitor. The negative side of commission-based advertising is that you only get paid when a customer buys, so if you have the wrong product, you may end up sending your traffic to another web site and not getting paid for it. If you do have the right product, however, commission-based advertising programs can be quite lucrative.

Targeting Your Advertising

Whether using a CPC, CPM, or commission-based program, realize that what you are selling your visitor, through your ad, is another *product.* That being the case, pick and choose your products carefully. Any product or service you advertise on your web site should be geared toward your target audience. What kind of product or service does your target audience *need*? Keep this in mind as you look for ad programs to run. If you have a music-based web site, there is no point in using your space to advertise automobiles, stock options, news publications, or home equity loans.

Banner Advertising: Everything You Need To Know

The easiest way to generate income using banner ads is to sign up with a pay-per-click or pay-per-thousand banner ad hosting service. Most of these companies aren't too concerned what your level of traffic is. Even if you have as little as 10,000 page views per month, you may qualify. CPM banner services can guarantee you income regardless of whether anyone clicks on the banners or not. That's the good news. The bad news is that although these CPM services often *claim* to pay up to $10 per 1000 impressions or even more, actual average payment is typically in the neighborhood of 25-50¢/1000 impressions. That means for every 1000 visits to your page, you make around 25¢. If you have 100,000 page views per month, with 2 banners per page, you make $50. However, most banner services today only allow you to display banners in the top half of your page, meaning you are generally limited to one banner per page. So, now you're down to $25 for every 100,000 page views.

Pay-per-click banners work a little differently. Typically, they pay you 5¢ to 15¢ every time someone clicks on the banner. Consider this: how many click-throughs will you need to earn an extra $20 from your site that month? Assuming a 10¢ per click payment rate, you'd need 200 clicks on that banner to make $20. But, how many visitors will you need to that page to generate 200 click-throughs? At a banner click-through rate of .005% (a typical average), you'd need 40,000 visits to make that extra $20 bucks. So, as you can see, you're not going to make a killing selling advertising space going this route.

I have tried a variety of banner advertising agencies over the years and continue to watch for new opportunities - but the industry is really struggling. All agencies, even the best ones, are paying only 25-50¢/1000 impressions these days. For a while I worked with a company called MusicVision (http://musicvision.com/)

100

which claimed (and still claim) to explicitly target a youthful, music-loving audience. As time passed, however, I watched that 'targeting' broaden to include a wider audience and by the time I decided to switch to a different banner company, MusicVision looked pretty much like everyone else. When I started with the company, they quoted me a rate of $2-$4/1000 impressions. I never hit that mark, though for a while I was making approximately $1/1000 impressions. After a few months that amount dropped to nearly 20¢/1000 - a drastic decline and further evidence why so many dot.com companies are going out of business.

In the summer of 2001, I switched to a banner ad company called FastClick (http://www.fastclick.com) because of the generally good buzz about them. I have been with them for over eighteen months now and I'm very, very happy with them. They are the most organized, user-friendly banner ad agency I've seen, and allow you, as the publisher, to select the individual banner ads you want to display. You can even monitor the click-through rate and money each ad is making for you. If an ad isn't working, you can drop it and instead use your own, default banner. It's simply outstanding. That said, however, even from FastClick.com, I am only seeing about 35¢/1000 impressions. Still, this is very competitive with other banner advertising agencies out there.

In addition to banner ads, FastClick.com offers a pop-under advertising program. That's where the real money is. Once you insert the code into your web pages, a pop-up ad will be displayed UNDER your page when that page is visited. This is excellent because the visitor does not see the ad until they leave your site. As another bonus, FastClick has set up the code so that each visitor only sees one pop-under ad per week they visit your site. That means you're not endlessly annoying your visitors with ads. It's a great situation all the way around. Currently, my pop-under ad campaigns are paying about $2/1000 ad impressions. Again, FastClick.com pays better than most of its competitors.

In the end, banner and pop-up advertising can bring in some extra cash if you have the traffic to justify it. If you wish to experiment with banner advertising, there are many options to explore. In the *Quick Reference Guide* at the end of this book I've included a few links to pay-per-click services, banner ad rotation software, and banner-related articles.

Affiliate Programs - The New Wave in Advertising

Affiliate programs have the largest potential for bonus income. While affiliate programs work in a similar fashion as the banner services mentioned above, with these programs you generally work on a commission basis. That is, rather than getting paid per click or impression, you get paid a percentage of any sales generated from that click-through. For example, Amazon.com, the "world's biggest bookstore" will pay you up to a 15% commission on any book or CD sold from a link coming to their site from your site.

This creates a huge potential for extra income, because now, rather than just selling your own product, you have the opportunity to turn your site into a retail outlet for other products. Whether it be books, music magazines, videos, games or Internet services, you can sell them all from your own web site!

Of course, you have to be very selective about the affiliate programs you sign up for. You don't want to just join any old affiliate program! To get the best results, you want offer your visitors the products they are likely to want! If you have a music-related site, all kinds of possibilities come to mind: music books, sheet music, 'how to' books, piano and guitar instruction videos, CDs, and on and on. Whatever products you choose to sell, target them toward the topic of your site. If yours is a guitar tablature site, sell them guitar tab books and guitar supplies. If you are specializing in the independent music business, provide them with books on recording, marketing and selling music. Use your imagination, because the sales are there if you have the right product and the right approach.

Where can you find an affiliate program? There are dozens of affiliate program directories on the Internet. See the *Quick Reference Guide* for a recommended list.

Testing and Marketing Your Affiliate Programs

Although affiliate programs offer great income potential, finding the right one for your web site may take some trial and error. I have tried literally dozens of music-related affiliate programs on my network of web sites. Of those, only a few have generated significant income. However, those few worked so well they made it worth the time it took to search them out. In a like manner, you'll need to test a variety of affiliate programs to see what will work for you and your visitors. If a program isn't generating income for you after a month or so, throw it out and find another to take its place.

Two Secrets to Successful Advertising

Most affiliate programs offer two ways to promote their product on your web site: display banner ads or display text ads. When you have this option, my experience shows that text ads actually tend to generate higher click-through rates than do banners or graphic ads. This is because you can directly integrate the ad copy into your existing site copy to make the offer more attractive to your visitor. Text ads are important for another reason as well: banners tend to add too much clutter to your web site. Text ads are clean, and don't take up a lot of space.

The second secret to successful advertising is that search forms of any kind have very, very high click-through rates. People love to search! There are a multitude of 'search tools' available on the Internet (such as SearchTraffic.com listed below) that pay you pennies every time someone uses it. This doesn't sound like much, but when you get a couple hundred searches a day, it does add up!

When you begin combining two, three or even four successful affiliate programs, you really begin to benefit. $200 here and there, and soon you're bringing in an extra $1000 a month just for having a web site!

Successful Affiliate Programs

Below are some of the programs I've used with success with in the past. Remember, the success of an affiliate program has a lot to do with the desires of the audience you're targeting, as well as ad placement. So, just because these have done well for me, doesn't necessarily mean they will do well for you. But these would be an ideal place to start. This information alone is worth 50 times the price of this book - it took many months to filter through worthless programs to find those that do well.

SearchTraffic.com (CPC)
StandardInternet.com (they have several programs, success varies) (CPC, CPM)
Focalex.com (pay-per-lead)
MusicVision.com (CPM banner ads)
FastClick.com (CPC, CPM)
SheetMusicPlus.com (Commission)
Tonos.com (Commission)

Others I have tried with less success, but still worth looking into include:

BulkClicks.com (CPC)
Advertising.com (CPC and CPM banner advertisements)
Music123.com (Commission)

And So....

While affiliate programs won't advance your music career, they can provide some regular income from your web site, especially as your business begins to grow. That extra income can be invested right back into promoting your music or creating more music product if you so choose. Check out the *Quick Reference Guide* for recommended Affiliate Program directories to further your research.

Internet Resources for the Independent Musician!

The following pages include reviews of web sites and services that have received my highest recommendations at the Music Biz Academy. For a more complete list of resources, please refer to the musician's directory at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory .

General Resources for Musicians
Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/indiemusic.htm

About.com: Musicians' Exchange - http://musicians.about.com/mbody.htm
About.com's *Musicians' Exchange* pages are among the best on the Net when it comes to keeping your pulse on what's going on in the music biz. The site covers everything from today's music-related headlines to articles that specifically relate to the cares and needs of independent musicians. The *Musicians' Exchange* features easy-to-use navigation and numerous topics of interest, including information on promotion, gear, labels, producers, and organizations. It's a good solid resource for musicians seeking information on almost any topic.

BandRadio - http://www.bandradio.com/
BandRadio, the "unsigned band resource," offers an excellent directory of agents, clubs, producers, promoters and more. They even have a searchable database. Just choose your category, desired city and state and search. In addition to all this, you'll find lots of great articles on the music business, as well as a fantastic collection of sample music business contracts. Don't miss the regular "Ask the Pros" column. Very highly recommended resource.

The Buzz Factor - http://www.thebuzzfactor.com
Bob offers a number of great services to independent musicians, including press kit evaluation and press release writing. Bob's Buzz Factor is most well known for its guerilla music marketing articles and tips, available weekly in the Buzz Factor newsletter and at the site (check out 'Bob's Warehouse of Free Articles'). You'll also want to check out Bob's famous Guerilla Music Marketing Handbook.

Festival Finder - http://www.festivalfinder.com/
At FestivalFinder.com, you'll discover the latest details on more than 2500 music festivals in North America. Festivals are categorized by genre, or use the search feature to locate festivals by date, location, performers or festival name. A quick browse of each category tells you what's coming up in the next couple of months. A simple design that provides you the info you want very quickly.

FourFront Media and Music - http://www.knab.com/
Christopher Knab, music consultant extraordinaire, has dedicated his time and talents to maintaining this superb web site full of useful articles for the struggling musician. Mr. Knab is not just another working musician offering advice - he's a well-known (and much requested) speaker who has participated in numerous music conferences, including the New Music Seminar, the Northwest Area Music Business Conference and several radio industry conferences. Mr. Knab is also the founder of 415 Records, a label who brought us such bands such as Romeo Void, Translator, Wire Train, and the Red Rockers, to name a few. Currently, he is a music industry consultant whose door is open to anyone who's interested.

GigAmerica: Find-A-Venue - http://www.gigamerica.com/Band/pages/band_findVenue.asp
Looking for a venue to perform your music? GigAmerica's Find-A-Venue tool will let you search for venues by city, state, or music style. Once you've located a potential venue, you can click on the search results to bring up contact information, including contact name, venue address and a map to the venue.

Indie-Music.com - http://indie-music.com/
Founded by Suzanne Glass, Indie-Music.com is a cornerstone of the online independent music community. The web site is full of excellent 'how to' articles. For example, you'll find *10 Useful Personality Characteristics for Musicians, Creative Drumming, Acoustic Guitar Amplification,* and *Studio Versus Home Recording*. In addition to being well stocked with helpful articles, you'll find an A-Z listing of bands, info on improving your 'chops,' an online directory, contract and software downloads, forums and more. Indie-Music.com is an excellent, well-rounded resource for musicians seeking full time musician status.

Moses Avalon - http://www.mosesavalon.com/
Want to avoid music business rip-offs? One way to start is to visit "Moses Avalon - Confessions of a Record Producer." Moses has produced and engineered records for several major and independent record labels. His work with Grammy award winning recording artists has earned him five RIAA Platinum record awards. His site offers an inside look at the business from someone who's been there. You can read about the *Scam of the Month*, check out an eye-opening royalties calculator, and read about *The Good Guys*, a list of great producers, studios and lawyers. Moses also provides in-depth consultation for unsigned artists.

MusicIsland.com - http://www.musicisland.com/
MusicIsland is a virtual treasure trove of contact information for record labels, legal resources, promoters, booking agents, radio stations, publishers, places to play and more. Each entry includes complete contact information (address, e-mail and phone). There's a lot of information to wade through here, but if you know what you need, MusicIsland will provide you with a number of good leads.

Major and Independent Record Labels

All of the major record companies have their own Internet site. You will find an abundance of independent record labels and vanity labels as well. Most of these have some point of contact (e-mail) available from their site. If you're interested in *their* music, contact them. Do *not* e-mail a record company stating things like: "I have a great band and you need to sign me." Believe it or not, I receive messages like that from musicians all the time. All it does is demonstrate a lack of understanding about how the music business works.

On a positive note, you may indeed find independent and vanity record labels which are looking for new artists. If this is the case, their web page will *clearly state* they are soliciting new artists and will invite you to submit your material.

You can find a comprehensive list of over 5000 record labels with web sites, searchable by location or genre, at http://www.rlabels.com/

Talent Agencies and Music Promotion Services

Complete listing available at http://musicbizacademy.com/directory/talentagencies.htm

As with record labels, talent agencies abound on the Internet. While I've reviewed the following web sites, I've not worked with many of these folks personally. If you opt to contact one of these companies, keep your head about you. If you have to pay an agency a fee before they will even listen to your music, be wary.

Ariel Publicity - http://www.arielpublicity.com/
If you're struggling in your effort to generate publicity for yourself or your band, stop by Ariel's place and see what she can do for you. Ariel's web site and credentials are most impressive. The list of bands she's worked with is as long as your arm, and include some big name acts. Services include press kits, tour booking, as well as CD release events and press management. Check out the long list of virtual press kits for Ariel's clients. A new addition to Ariel Publicity includes 'Rock Girl Marketing,' a national street team that can help you set up grass roots promotion in your market. Check out the menu of detailed street team services available.

Degy Management Services - http://www.degy.com/
DMS was formed in 1996 by Ari Nisman and Josh Degenstein, two music promoters whose past promotional work has included such artists as George Clinton, Eric Johnson, Luscious Jackson and Mazzy Star. Degy is a full-service artist management company, whose services include promotion, label shopping, press kit work, endorsement shopping, tour support, consignments and even CD and tape design. While you're visiting the Degy site, be sure to take a look at their Monthly Music Forum, a fantastic gigging resource which focuses each month on the venues, magazines, and radio stations for various cities nationwide.

Evolution Promotion - http://www.evolutionpromotion.com/
Sting, R.E.M., Steward Copeland, Jane Siberry - these are just a few of the many artists who have made use of one of the many services provided by Evolution Promotion. Services include radio promotion, tour promotion, direct customer marketing, Internet radio and marketing, web design and consulting. The Evolution Promotion team creates custom campaigns for clients designed to achieve breakthrough success at radio, on the Net and in the marketplace. The founder of Evolution, Karen Lee, was a national promoter for Elektra and IRS Records, where she promoted The Cars, Motley Crue, Metallica, 10,000 Maniacs, The GoGo's, Concrete Blonde, and others. Need a promoter? Get one with experience. Here's one place to start.

GigMasters - http://www.gigmasters.com/
GigMasters bills itself as "The Online Booking Service for Live Entertainment" and services itself to anyone looking for live entertainers. Visitors may search by event (such as weddings, banquets, etc.) or service required (live band, caterers, photographer, etc.). The site is really quite impressive, and with over 18,000 musicians currently on their roster, GigMasters certainly has something for everyone. For musicians, GigMasters offers an online press kit and the unique ability to bid on gigs as they come up. Very much worth taking a look at for musicians seeking work.

Goodnight Kiss Music - http://www.goodnightkiss.com/
Songwriters, check out Goodnight Kiss Music, a music publisher based in Hollywood, California. GKM specializes in placing songs within the film, television, and recording industry and they have a very impressive list of credits. Goodknight Kiss is open to considering material from unknown songwriters for their projects, but they do have a strict list of requirements for submissions. Interested songwriters should check their daily updates to see what they are currently working on, and then contact them directly before submitting any material. A subscription-based newsletter is also available which outlines their current projects. Check out their excellent Song Critique Checklist.

Impact Entertainment Group - http://www.impactentertainmentgrp.com/
Impact Entertainment Group is a full-service artist management group that specializes in developing, managing, and promoting signed and unsigned performing artists. In business since 1978, Impact has much experience under its belt. With Rob Cohen (formerly of Oceana Records) and Jerry Love (formerly of A&M Records) at the helm, you will be dealing with some of the people who were involved in discovering such talent as Paula Cole, Living Color, and the Mighty, Mighty Bosstones. Impact is currently accepting unsolicited materials for further review.

IndieBiz.com - http://www.kathoderaymusic.com/indiebiz/
IndieBiz.com, from Kathode Ray Music has been around for a long, long time providing great services to musicians. Today, IndieBiz specializes in street and Internet promotion help for independent musicians as well as artist development. Choose a scenario from their web site and you'll see how they can help. Need a manager? Booking agent? How about press? Their client list includes a couple bands you may have heard of - Marcy Playground, oh, and how about this one...Bush. IndieBiz.com started small as Kathode Ray Music a number of years ago. Now, they are a real player in the industry, named "Best Behind The Scenes Stringpuller" by The Nashville Scene.

J-Bird Records - http://www.jbirdrecords.com/
J-Bird Records is a combination talent agency, record company, web site provider and store all in one. They are a high profile record label featuring such artists as Billy Squire, Rockapella, The Guess Who and 350 others (including indie artists).

MusiciansContact.com - http://www.musicianscontact.com/
Over the past 30 years, managers, record company personnel, producers, booking agents, employers and production companies have used Musicians Contact to locate replacement musicians and singers. If you think you might be interested in putting your name in the pool, sign up. Clients using Musicians Contact seeking fill-in musicians include such big names as Glen Frey, Tom Waits, Warrant, Dishwalla, Herbie Hancock, Neil Diamond, Ozzy Ozbourne, Billy Joel, and others.

NOMA Music - http://www.nomamusic.com
NOMA is a very well-established song placement and promotion agency. They represent worldwide bands, songwriters, instrumentalists, and composers seeking recording contracts or song licensing for motion pictures, television, commercials, and video releases. NOMA works with a large network of over 400 production companies. Recent successes include client song placement in *Dawson's Creek*, MTV's *The Osbournes*, FX's *The Shield*, the upcoming film *Paris* starring Karen Black as well as *Longshot*, which includes cameos by Britney Spears, Jermaine Jackson, Kenny Rogers, and others. Other recent client placements include deals with Naxos Audio Books, Tokyo Pop Animation Company; Xtremeride Sports, and NHL Hockey. NOMA provides an aggressive program to get your music into the right hands.

RainMaker Music Publicity - http://www.rainmakerpublicity.com/
RainMaker specializes in generating buzz for your band by promoting your new release, gigs, tours, setting up radio interviews, pitching feature stories to magazine editors and setting up in-store performances. For example, for a local CD release, RainMaker pitches your CD to local press (including fanzines, magazines, and newspapers), local college and commercial radio, and e-zines and online sites. RainMaker also offers extensive national promotion services as well as tour support. Their rates are extremely reasonable (running $45/ hour as of this writing) and they do accept credit cards. Check out their huge, overwhelmingly positive list of testimonials from clients

Tonos - http://www.tonos.com/
Tonos has blown the door of opportunity open for more than a few musicians and songwriters. Founded by legendary music makers Carole Bayer Sager, David Foster and Kenneth 'Babyface' Edmonds (all three Grammy winners), Tonos gives many artists the chance to get their music into the hands of the A&R folks that matter. On a regular basis, record labels, film/television music supervisors, producers, managers, and other music industry entities contact Tonos when they're looking for specific musical talents. Be sure to check out their industry opportunities listings.

Products and Services for Musicians
Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/musicservices.htm

ABC Pictures - http://www.abcpictures.com/
ABC is the premier photographic duplication company for artists looking to procure photo slicks or other promotional materials for your press kit! I have personally worked with ABC and can vouch for their price, quality, service and turnaround time. ABC offers 8x10s, posters, postcards, business cards, and cassette inserts. Highly recommended. Call and request their free catalog.

Art Attack Productions - http://www.artattackprods.com/
Want to make a music video? Art Attack Productions specializes in video for the music industry and has gathered an impressive band of directors whose work has won Emmy, Cleo and Cable Ace awards. Whether you're an independent artist, or a major label talent, Art Attack can handle your project, and take it from pre-production to post-production. They can also create multimedia CD-ROM digital press kits that combine media elements to create a powerful video image of your act.

ASA Concert Production & Tour Management - http://www.concertmanagement.com/
ASA offers complete audio and video production services as well as concert production and tour management. They can provide everything you need to make your event run like clockwork, including sound, lighting, backline, labor, security, catering, public services and even merchandising. Web services, including creation of live streaming video, are available to clients as well.

Barcoding - Independent Records - http://www.indierec.com/
To sell your CDs in stores, you'll need a bar code for your product. Unfortunately, getting your own UCC vendor code can be a bit spendy. Independent Records provides an essential service for musicians in this position. If you register your CD release with Independent Records, they will add your product to their catalog and serve as your 'record label.' This allows IR to generate and assign your product a bar code which you can then use for your CD release.

John Vestman Mastering - http://www.johnvestman.com/
I recently discovered John's studio while searching the Net for someone to assist in mastering one of my own CD projects. John's rates (and results) are excellent, and there are a lot of great articles here that provide insight into the thought process behind John's highly regarded work. Articles include *How to Prepare for Mastering, What to Expect from Mastering, Tips for Better Mixing, Miking, and Recording Vocals, Compression Explained, Studio Monitor Madness* and others. A lot of good, easy-to-understand information here for those unfamiliar with the technical details behind mastering.

Mi2N: The Music Industry News Network - http://www.mi2n.com/
One of my favorites, Mi2N is the place to find out what's going on right now in the music industry. Every day, you'll find dozens of new stories, and if you're looking for a career in the business, don't miss the career postings.

MP3Machine.com - http://www.mp3machine.com/
Need some MP3 tools? Encoders? CD Rippers? Playlist managers? Whatever it is, you can find it at MP3Machine.com, a truly invaluable resource for musicians doing music on the Internet. As of this writing, MP3Machine contains over 650 software titles to help you get the job done. Are you simply looking for help converting files to MP3? Check out their fantastic and easy-to-read FAQ.

SumaDek Portable Listening Station - http://www.sumadek.com/
A cool way to set up listening stations at gigs or showcases, SumaDek serves as both a promotional billboard, and a CD display. Slick, clean, and groovy.

Promotional Merchandise and Gimmicks

Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/musicmerchandising.htm

Bandwear.com - http://makeit.bandwear.com/
Bandwear.com specializes in creating unique merchandise and specialty items for not only the music industry as a whole, but for independent musicians, as well. Using your own artwork, you can create shirts, caps, stickers, posters, just about anything. If you don't have your own design, their staff can help you with art design and logos. Once your product is created, Bandwear can provide you with a custom link so you can sell your product from your own web site.

Branders - http://www.branders.com/
Put your band logo on tons of cool products: mouse pads, lava lamps, calculators, hats, shirts, clocks, games, toys, magnets, notepads, chocolate bars, and more. You'll find more merchandising options at Branders than just about anyone else. You can even preview merchandise with your logo on it to see how it looks before you buy.

CafePress.com - http://www.cafepress.com/
Looking to sell T-shirts, mugs, mouse pads with your band logo or photo on them? Look no further than CafePress.com. The process couldn't be easier... just upload your high quality gif, jpg or bmp file, click on save changes and you will instantly have your own store at CafePress.com. Sign up is free, and your only expense is the cost (base price) of the merchandise you actually sell. You set your own prices, and you decide your own profit margin by adding your desired profit to the 'base price.' Link to your store right from your web site. A simple, elegant solution for those wanting to sell merchandise in small quantities.

MusiciansMerch.com - http://www.musiciansmerch.com
MusiciansMerch.com is a start-up company that provides screen printing on a variety of products for bands. Excellent prices, and their company motto is "your music is more important than our profit." Worth getting a quote if you are looking for some promotional merchandise.

Printable Promotions - http://www.printablepromotions.com/
Printable Promotions is a multi-award-winning producer of unique custom-imprinted promotional products, ad specialties, and logo merchandise. They also screenprint or embroider t-shirts and sportswear. You'll find thousands of products you can add your band logo to, including apparel, portfolios, bags, buttons, watches, flashlights, magnetic products, banners, packaging, toys and so much more. Lots of cool stuff to drool over.

Musician How-To's, Tutorials, and Music Business Tips
Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/musictutorials.htm

Doing It Yourself - A Guide to Making Music - http://www.ram.org/music/making/tips/DiY.html
This site, maintained by musician Ram Samudrala, provides an honest and interesting insight into what it takes to make and market your music on the cheap. Ram is a staunch advocate of the 'Free Music Philosophy' and using it he sold over 3,000 copies of his CD on the Internet in two years. On the web site, he tells you how. You'll find tips on building (and using) a studio, copyrights, tutorials, duplication, marketing and promotion. A very interesting read.

Inside the Music Business - http://www.insidethemusicbusiness.com/
The best way to learn about the music business is to have your questions answered directly by the very people that are shaping the future of the industry. To do that, *Inside the Music Business* brings you countless one-on-one interviews with some of today's biggest movers and shakers - managers, producers, A&R, radio executives and establish recording artists. Check out *The Power Player*s, and don't miss the monthly audio series.

InsideSessions - http://www.insidesessions.com/
Brought to you by the Universal Music Group, the largest record company in the world, InsideSessions is an Internet-based program that teaches you everything you need to know to transform your passion for music into a successful career as a recording artist or industry professional. The online 10-session course features instruction from artists Sting, Sheryl Crow & Nelly, record executives Jimmy Iovine and Russell Simmons, producer Glen Ballard and many others. Once you sign up, Universal guarantees their A&R executives will listen to your demo, and even provide you written feedback if you select that option.

Just For Musicians.com - http://www.just-for-musicians.com/
Ever wonder why some musicians make it in the music industry and others don't? JustForMusicians.com is essentially a running commentary from one musician's perspective on how to find success in the music business. It's good reading for the uninformed, and takes a sort of 'pump-you-up' approach to the business. A good place to go for encouragement and motivation. Just For Musicians covers the basics of the '4 P's': playing, performance, promotion and production.

Music Business Solutions - http://www.mbsolutions.com/
Peter Spellman, the Director of Music Business Solutions, has compiled a web site dedicated to offering business solutions to the independent musician. As an experienced musician, manager, and feature writer for Musician magazine, Peter has a wealth of experience to draw from. MBS features include the free *Music Biz Insight* newsletter, reference material, and articles on creating music business strategies to build your foundations. MBS also features one of the cleanest, most selective musician's resource directories around.

Musician Communities & Web Hosting
Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/musichosting.htm

Also see the chapter entitled *The Best Places to Promote, Sell, and Distribute Your Music on the Internet*.

Bands 411 - http://www.bands411.com/
Web page hosting services for musicians are a dime a dozen. However, Bands 411 really stands out both in design and concept. This very attractive music hosting service will provide you with a place to host your band site on the Internet absolutely free. Their fascinating web site control panel lets you add your content to their preexisting page templates. This makes for easy updates and uploading of your news, tour dates, MP3 files (both high and low streaming), calendar, contact information and pictures. Bands 411 also provides you with a complete e-mail management system, from which fans can subscribe and you can deliver information directly to them.

CD Baby - http://www.cdbaby.com/
CD Baby is an online CD store dedicated solely to independent music. They've been generating buzz in indie music circles for years and there's good reason for it. CD Baby has created a wonderful vehicle for indie musicians to get their music on the web easily without the usual headaches. For a set up fee of $35, CD Baby will create a page for you that includes sound clips, reviews, and images. You'll be able to sell your CDs right from CD Baby, and customers will be able to purchase via credit card. CD Baby takes $4 for every CD sold. If you're looking for someone to host your music site, CD Baby should be a strong candidate.

CDStreet.com - http://www.cdstreet.com/
Using CDStreet you can sell your music through your web site (as an E-Commerce solution using provided HTML code) or through theirs. CDStreet simply takes 20% of your CD price. If you sell a CD for $12.99, you keep $10.39. You also have the option of allowing CDStreet to ship your CDs for you, essentially making them your warehouse. There's no additional fee for this service, other than that CDStreet will keep the shipping costs. Of all the sites listed here, CDStreet has one of the most attractive artist page layouts - very easy on the eyes and with simple navigation. Visitors can rate your music, post reviews, get news and information and listen to and purchase your music. Very highly recommended. There is a one-time $29.95 setup fee, but no recurring or hidden charges. A fantastic deal on a high-visibility, high-class web site.

Galaris - http://www.galaris.com/
One thing I really like about Galaris is they keep the process simple. They'll set up a page for you for a flat fee of $25, and they take $4 for each CD sale. You get paid immediately when a CD sells - you don't have to wait until the end of the month or until you hit a minimum amount in sales. And, Galaris forwards the customer information to you so you know who bought your CD. Galaris provides a number of other services as well, including multimedia services, graphic design, and event promotion.

GarageBand.com - http://www.garageband.com/
Supported by such well known producers as George Martin (The Beatles) and Jerry Harrison (Talking Heads), GarageBand.com puts the success of member artists (membership is free) in the hands of music fans and listeners. Musicians are invited to upload their music to the Garageband.com site, where it will be reviewed and rated by an audience of loyal users, including many other musicians. Songs are anonymously rated by a comparative ranking algorithm designed to eliminate biases. The process is 100% merit-based, and 100%-driven by the reviews of music lovers. The highest ranked songs/artists picked by listeners have the opportunity to have their songs included on a GarageBand 'Evolved' CD. In addition to the exposure opportunities inherit in the system, you get constant feedback on your songs from objective reviewers, free gig promotion to fans, and a way to sell your CDs to fans. GarageBand.com has the backing and support most web sites only dream of. A definite must for serious musicians seeking the opportunity to be heard.

Guitar 9 Records - http://www.guitar9.com/
Guitar 9 Records is a hosting service/online store/monthly e-zine for independent artists/bands that feature the guitar as their dominant instrument. If you're not already familiar with Guitar 9, I urge you (particularly if you're a guitarist with a CD to market) to take a look at Guitar 9's fine site. Guitar 9 Records has been around for years and have consistently stayed true to their purpose - promoting independent guitar music on the Internet. Some of the finest undiscovered guitar players in the world can be found here.

JavaMusic - http://www.javamusic.com/
Here is a music community that takes the meaning of 'community' to the next level. Participate in the many activities provided by JavaMusic, including message boards, chats, contests, download freebies and tools, read articles from industry insiders, and more. Other services include CD reviews, mp3 player promotion, and CD manufacturing. A great stop for java, music, and promotion.

Just Plain Folks - http://www.jpfolks.com/
JPF is a community of over 18,000 songwriters, recording artists, music publishers, record labels, performing arts societies, engineers, producers, journalists, retailers and just about every other type of member of the music industry. The idea, essentially, is that thousands of 'just plain folks' share ideas on touring, manufacturing, favorite web sites, and organizations friendly to musicians. The entire community is centered around the idea of working together for the benefit of all. Forums, which are very active, include lyric and MP3 feedback, networking, mentoring, a technical forum, 'roadtrips,' and boards specific to the many chapters of Just Plain Folks around the world. Members include Grammy and Emmy winners, staff from BMI and ASCAP, TAXI, AFM, right along side plain old street musicians trying to find a break. Membership is free.

The Muse's Muse - A Songwriters Resource - http://www.musesmuse.com/new.html
The Muse's Muse has, over its many years, become one of the most enduring and useful independent songwriter communities on the Internet. Songwriters will find a lot to peruse here, but I especially recommend checking out the 'Interactivities,' where you'll find chat rooms, as well as an active message board. I also highly recommend the writings of their columnists, especially their excellent Copyright and Publishing Q&A column. Be sure to subscribe to the free monthly newsletter.

Online Rock - http://www.onlinerock.com/
Online Rock offers a variety of hosting services for musicians, from free hosting for smaller web sites (under 10 MB), all the way up to the 'All Access' service, which includes 200 MB of storage for $14.99/month. Online Rock members also enjoy promotion via 'Online Rock Radio.' Finally, you'll find a library of music-related articles written by experienced musicians and guest columnists, as well as links to equipment, software and books.

Sonic Garden - http://www.sonicgarden.com/
Musicians looking for a place to host their music content will want to check out Sonic Garden, which offers not only a free web site (with your music, bio, pics and more), but a ton of other useful promotion tools - all free. Sonic Garden, created in part by Bryan Jones, former VP of MP3.com, is a very attractive alternative for musicians and features some incredibly easy setup tools to get your personal web site up and running very quickly. Community programs include participation in CD compilations, soundtracks, retail and radio programs. Sonic Garden has a HUGE artist roster, and I can see why. There's a lot here to like.

SoundClick - http://www.soundclick.com/
SoundClick is one of the Internet's bigger musician communities, providing hosting for signed and unsigned bands alike. SoundClick features streaming MP3 for visitors, and a song charting system based on visitors' votes as well as song plays. You can host your music here for free, as well as sell CDs. There is a small sign-up fee, but after that, there's no commission or percentage to pay SoundClick. Members also get message boards, news, mailing lists, lyrics and song story pages included.

Compact Disc Manufacturers

Inevitably you will be looking to produce your own CD of music, if you have not already. Like everything else, there are a large number of CD manufacturers represented on the Internet. If you are in need of manufacturing, particularly for mass duplication, let me recommend Northwestern Media, which has been very good to me. For more info, see http://www.musicbizacademy.com/cdmanufacturing.htm .

Here are other manufacturers worth checking out. Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/cdmanufacturers.htm

Accupress CD Manufacturing and Duplication - http://www.accupress.com
Accupress offers duplication packages for both CDs and cassettes at reasonable prices. You can get 500 CDs, (basic layout) including film for $1145. Looking for just cassettes? Prices are excellent for cassette-only packages. (500 cassettes for $569). Accupress can also provide you with promotional materials such as postcards, posters, promotional photos and release flyers.

CD Digital Card - http://www.cddigitalcard.com/
Forget that bulky, inconvenient mess of a press kit you have. How about putting your music, multimedia, and press kit on a 'CD Digital Card?' CDDC offers CD and DVD cards in a number of amazing shapes and sizes that will play in any CD-Rom drive. And once your CDDC is made, it can be wrapped in any number of attractive packaging solutions. You simply must check out the huge variety of CD templates available, which include a guitar pick and a guitar. There's some very cool stuff here for musicians looking for creative ways to deliver press kits or other information to those they want to impress.

CD Forge - http://www.cdforge.com/
This impressive web site highlights CD Forge's commitment to quality CD manufacturing. With CD Forge "You will NEVER have to worry about being treated like the 'little guy' by a gigantic, corporate conglomerate CD plant." CD Forge has an impressive list of clients and labels and turnaround time is only 10 days after receipt of camera-ready film and proofs.

CD Replic8 - http://www.cdreplic8.com/
Want the best price and options when you're ready to manufacture your CD? Let disc manufacturers bid for your job! Post details about your project at CD Replic8 and get bids from CD manufacturers wanting your business. Sort and follow up with the bids that sound interesting. You can also receive bids for mastering, art design, raw materials, multimedia content and more.

CDS Graphics & Replication - http://www.cdsg.com/
While looking for a graphic designer I stumbled across CDS graphics, a company that specializes not only in graphic and CD packaging design, but also provides complete CD manufacturing services. Not only was I impressed with their design work (they have plenty of examples on their site) but I was very impressed with their commitment to serving their customers. CDS can design and manufacture your entire CD package for you. While their prices are not the lowest you'll find, they are reasonable and this certainly is one case where you'll get the quality you pay for. If you're searching for a company to put it all together for you, and work side by side with you in creating a package that represents you and your music, CDS is certainly a good choice.

DiscMakers - http://www.discmakers.com/
DiscMakers is arguably the most well-known CD manufacturer marketing itself to independent musicians. If you know almost nothing about the CD manufacturing process, and don't have the time or desire to learn, DiscMakers is a good choice. You can send in your photo, and they will design the entire package for you, then send you a proof for your final approval and/or adjustments. They have excellent customer service, and a high quality product. You can expect to pay more for their 'one-on-one' service, however. DiscMakers is generally about 20% higher than most of their competitors, even with their 'new, lower prices.' But again, they are a good choice for those just getting started who want to hire a company to handle all the CD design decisions for them.

ESP LaserMetrix - http://www.esp-cd.com/
With clients like Ani DiFranco, Korn, and Megadeth, ESP got my attention. Services include not only CD and cassette manufacturing, but they can also provide you with a number of other promotional products - posters, brochures, T-shirts, business cards, countertop displays and more. Stop by and request your free catalog.

Front Porch CD - http://www.frontporchcd.com/
Front Porch CD takes the 'guy next door' approach to CD manufacturing and duplication - their web site is very simple, but peppered with testimonials from very happy clients. The overall feeling one comes away with as a visitor to their site is that Front Porch CD takes very good care of their customers. The general consensus, from the clients quoted, is that Front Porch CD treats them like royalty. "It was good to finally find a company that treated us like real people," is one typical example. Front Porch's services include manufacturing, duplication, graphic design, and promise quick turnaround times. Their prices are very competitive. A large client list is available for references. Based on what I've seen, Front Porch gets a very high recommendation.

MixDown - http://www.mixdown.com/
Imagine never having to stock a single CD in your garage - in fact, imagine never having to mass duplicate CDs at all. A fan comes to your web site, buys your CD, and it's automatically manufactured - one at a time - packaged, then shipped directory to your customer. You then receive a check in the mail for the sale. That is essentially the service MixDown offers its clients. Once you join, you upload (or mail) your digital music files and your artwork to the service, create a "buy" button on your web site, and you're all set. No more stocking CDs in-house. Also offers slim-case CD, DVD, and CD-card packages.

Mixonic - http://www.mixonic.com/
Much like MixDown, at Mixonic you can create your entire CD from start to finish online - upload your audio files then use the CD Designer to add your music to a CD. Then, use the label editor to upload graphics, text, and/or clipart to be printed directly on your CD surface in full color. Finally, upload and design your CD insert. By the time you are done using Mixonic's wizard-like interface, you've created a CD, which you can save (to finish later), or order for manufacturing. Guaranteed 2 business day turnaround on CD orders. Short run orders, or big orders, it doesn't matter.

NorthWestern Media - http://www.nwmedia.com/
NorthWestern Media is my personal choice for a manufacturer. You won't find a better combination of quality, service, and price anywhere. Their web site reflects their great service and reputation as a class act in the CD duplication industry. NorthWestern offers all the usual services, including CD and cassette duplication, graphic design, mastering and film. In addition, they offer a unique fulfillment service for those interested in having someone else manage and ship your orders for you. Good prices, fast turnaround, and overall nice guys.

Oasis - http://www.oasiscd.com/
Oasis is one of the most highly respected independent music CD manufacturing plants in the business. You'll find competitive prices, as well as a very service-oriented team ready to assist you with your project. Oasis offers a number of great incentives for their clients. First, Oasis includes one of your tracks in their OasisSampler CD which is then sent to radio stations nationwide. Secondly, Oasis clients participate in their

114

national distribution program which gets your CD at Amazon.com, and a free web site at CDBaby.com (which Oasis pays for). They will also finance your project. There's a lot to like at Oasis.

Short Run Music - http://www.shortrunmusic.com/
Short Run Music specializes in, well, short runs - not just CD manufacturing, but promotional materials such as postcards and flyers. What you get, for substantially less cost, is a quality product, that looks and sounds professional. The more CDs you buy, the less expensive they are per disc. CD packages include full color printing directly on disc, 4-panel (full color front and back) folders, and full color tray card insert (full color, both sides), assembled in jewel cases and shrinkwrapped. There are other extras available, and of course other options for those who want to do part of the job (such as folder insertion) themselves. Short Run Music will even send you a single CD for your inspection and approval before you run off a bunch.

Graphic & Web Design Services
A short list of designers specializing in CD packaging, web sites and art design.

Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/cdgraphicdesign.htm

Digital Vista: Music Promotion Design Studio - http://www.d-vista.com/music/
Rich DiSilvio of Digital Vista specializes in what he calls "Visual Promotions" which includes web design, CD cover art and multimedia. In reviewing DiSilvio's portfolio I must say I was quite impressed! The artwork presented all has a very personal, unique touch, with a visually stunning presentation. Those of you looking for a fantasy art/otherworldly look for your CD covers check this out! Digital's CD cover artwork would certainly make your CD stand out on the rack! Clients include some names you may have heard of: Alice Cooper, Yngwie Malmsteen, Krokus, Lita Ford, K7, and more. Additional services include computer illustration and graphics. Very highly recommended.

Grand Masters of Flash - http://www.grandmastersofflash.com/
Want to integrate Flash into your web site? Check out Joe Sweeney's 'Grand Masters of Flash' service. Some very cool designs here, a huge client list, and plenty of sample projects to check out.

ProgArt - http://www.progart.com
Hold on to your hats - If you are in search of a graphic designer, don't miss the work of artist Mattias Norén at ProgArt. Once you log into the site you'll see the most recently finished project, but be sure to click on 'CD Artwork' to see his past work. Mattias is without a doubt one of the finest artists I've seen in the genre. Each project captures the mood/story of the album, and there is a definite 'look' to Mattias' artwork. Highly recommended.

Second Sight Design - http://www.secondsight.com/
Second Sight Design has one of the highest profiles of any designer I've reviewed. Past clients include Willie Nelson, Bush, Merle Haggard, John Prine, and many other familiar names. Services include CD art design, logo design, web design, brochure creation, VHS covers, and 'interactive business cards.' Portfolio and examples available at the site.

Skyfall Media - http://www.skyfallmedia.com/index.html
Any serious artist needs an impressive design. More importantly, the design needs to be designed by someone who understands music and how to market music. I recommend Skyfall Media because they GET IT. Impressive, affordable, and always credible. Skyfall Media designs CD covers, web sites, posters, logos, and more at a fraction of the cost of most designers. Hosting and registering domain names is also available. Be sure to check out the one-sheets, an original service that is guaranteed to make you look good. Highly recommended.

Music Law and Copyright Resources

Ever get confused about copyright, trademark, or royalty issues? Need copyright or publishing forms? You can find this and more on the Internet.

Complete listing available at http://www.musicbizacademy.com/directory/copyright.htm

Copyright & Publishing Q&A by Nancy Reese - http://www.musesmuse.com/pubq-a.html
This copyright Q&A archive is, without question, the most complete and informative data repository I know on the subject. If you have any questions at all about the legal side of the music business, chances are you will find the answer here. Topics include demo/recording agreements, pitching & representation, licensing, collaboration, registration of works, performing rights organizations, work for hire, publishing agreements and many more. There is a lot of information to sort through here, but it's well worth the time.

The Copyright Pages - http://www.reach.net/~scherer/p/copyrite.htm
A selection of valuable articles pertaining in particular to copyright law as it relates to music. Great information here regarding royalties, performance rights, computer music files, and copyright law as it relates to sheet music and tab distribution.

FindLaw.com - http://www.findlaw.com/
Need an entertainment attorney, but have no idea where to turn? At FindLaw.com you can search for attorney's by practice (entertainment law), state, and city. It's a quick way to find legal help fast. You can also browse the 'Industry Center' for media entertainment to see the latest news, litigation in process, associations, government resources, laws, web sites, and more. It's all quite interesting.

The Future of Music Coalition - http://www.futureofmusic.org/index.cfm
This fascinating web site features numerous articles and commentaries on the state of the music industry, technology and the evolving debate over intellectual property issues. One of the stated goals of the Coalition is to educate musicians about the critical issues shaping the industry. You'll find a large selection of articles, news updates, a library of important books, research areas, newsletters, and ideas for how you can participate in the debate. Interesting reading.

The Guild of International Songwriters and Composers - http://www.songwriters-guild.co.uk/
Opened to the public in 1986, The Guild of International Songwriters and Composers, based in Cornwall, England offers some great services for its members. Free copyright certification, free song assessment, a lyricist/composer collaboration service, free consultation and contract evaluation, free legal services, as well as a subscription to their quarterly Songwriting and Composing magazine. There is an annual fee of £50.00 (approx $70 U.S. as of this writing), but the benefits are well worth it.

The Harry Fox Agency - http://www.nmpa.org/hfa/licensing.html
Want to use a copyright-protected song but you're confused about who to contact and how to go about it? This easy-to-use licensing FAQ from the Harry Fox Agency takes you step by step through the process of licensing songs for use in recording, performance, film, or media and tells you exactly what you need to do and what it will cost you.

Intellectual Property Issues - http://www.negativland.com/intprop.html
This music copyright resource provided by Negativland is superb, and for its small size it packs a big punch. You'll find articles and suggested links to information on copyright, fair use, trademarking, and intellectual property.

MPA Directory of Music Publishers - http://www.mpa.org/agency/pal.html
Looking for a publisher's contact information? The Music Publishers' Association's directory contains contact information for publishers, both domestic and foreign, and copyright administrating offices. A very complete listing and an excellent resource

MusicContracts.com - http://www.musiccontracts.com/
This site, an extension of the Law Office of J. Scott Rudsenske, offers an assortment of contracts for the artist, record label, manager, producer and publisher. Contracts are available in packages, or individually. Once you select, and pay for the contract (most run $19.95), you may immediately download it

Musician's Intellectual Law and Resources Links - http://www.aracnet.com/%7Eschornj/index.shtml
A complete directory containing not only links, but general information on the basics of copyright and music law. You'll find notes on trademarks, mechanical royalties, an analysis of recording contract clauses and more. Also, it's written in plain English, so little guesswork is involved. A great place to find basic music law information quickly.

Public Domain Music - http://www.pdinfo.com/
Need to find out if a song you want to perform or record is in the public domain? Then check out this public domain information project. You'll find numerous articles on public domain works and copyright information as well as public domain song lists, research resources, tips, and a well-documented FAQ.

Recording Industry Association of America - http://www.riaa.com/
The RIAA represents the trade organization whose member companies create and/or manufacture 90% of all sound recordings in the United States. Why is this of use to you, the indie musician? Because although a few independents view the RIAA as the 'enemy' representing big money and big business, they do in fact provide a wealth of information on what's happening in the industry. The RIAA site is regularly updated with information on new technologies, copyright law, freedom of speech, licensing, royalties, market data and more. Hanging out at the RIAA site you definitely get a different perspective - the business perspective - and that's a perspective you ought to know.

U.S. Copyright Office Homepage - http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/
The U.S. Copyright Office has recently updated their web site to make it much more user-friendly. You'll find all the forms you need, details on copyright basics, as well as the latest news on copyright law. Get all your forms here.

Quick Reference Guide

Want more? Just can't get enough? Here's a categorized list of other resources I recommend on the Internet. Many of these are mentioned within the pages of this book, and others are provided so that you can do further research on your own. Items in **BOLD** receive my highest recommendations:

ISPs

Comcast:	http://www.comcast.com
Verizon:	http://www.verizon.com/
Broadband Reports:	http://www.broadbandreports.com/
Everything DSL:	http://www.everythingdsl.com/
Test Your Connection Speed:	http://webservices.zdnet.com/zdnet/bandwidth/
NetZero:	http://www.netzero.com
ePinions: Internet Service Providers:	http://www.epinions.com/cmsw-ISP
ISPcheck:	http://www.ispcheck.com/
The Online Connection:	http://www.barkers.org/online/index.html
Free ISPs:	http://thefreesite.com/Free_Internet_Access/
All Free ISP:	http://www.all-free-isp.com/

AntiVirus / Firewall

Norton Internet Security:	http://www.symantec.com/sabu/nis/nis_pe/

Web Browsers

Internet Explorer:	http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.asp
Netscape:	http://channels.netscape.com/ns/browsers/default.jsp
Other Browsers:	http://browsers.evolt.org/

Web Hosts

HostBaby.com:	http://www.hostbaby.com
How to Choose a Hosting Service:	http://www.wilsonweb.com/wmt2/issue27.htm#WebHosting
Top Host Comparison and Search:	http://www.tophosts.com
Compare Web Hosts:	http://www.comparewebhosts.com/
HostCompare:	http://www.hostcompare.com/
Web Hosting Guide:	http://www.webhosting-guide.com
Free Web Host Directory:	http://www.freewebspace.net/
Free Web Site Hosting Services:	http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Web_Space/

Domain Name Registration

DirectNIC:	http://www.directnic.com
000domains.com:	http://www.000domains.com/
Network Solutions (VeriSign):	http://www.netsol.com/
Go Daddy Software:	http://www.godaddy.com

FTP Clients and Tutorials

CuteFTP: http://www.cuteftp.com/cuteftp/
WS_FTP: http://www.ipswitch.com/products/WS_FTP
Using FTP to publish on the Web: http://www.brown.edu/webmaster/unix/www-ftpfaq.html
CuteFTP Tutorial: http://www.exitnow.com/skillbuilder/viewlets/cuteftp.htm
Getting Started with FTP: http://www.pageresource.com/putweb/ftptut1.htm

Web Site Designers for Hire

Grand Masters of Flash: http://www.grandmastersofflash.com/
HostBaby.com Designer Search: http://www.hostbaby.com/webdesigners.htm?a=meet
GetaGraphic.com   http://www.getagraphic.com
Compare Web Designers   http://www.CompareWebDesigners.com
Web Design Freelancers: http://www.webdesignlance.com/
Elance: http://www.elance.com

Web Page Editors & Design Tools

Namo WebEditor   http://www.namo.com/
TextPad (Text File Editor):   http://www.textpad.com
Netscape Composer: http://channels.netscape.com/ns/browsers/default.jsp
HTML Editor Reviews: http://www.dooyoo.co.uk/computers/applications/wysiwyg_html_editors/
CNET HTML Editor Reviews: http://www.cnet.com/software/search/0,11066,0-3227860-1202-0,00.html
HTML Editors - Info & Reviews: http://html.miningco.com/cs/htmleditors/

HTML Tutorials

HTML Tutorial for Beginners: http://davesite.com/webstation/html/
HTML Clinic: http://www.htmlclinic.com/
HTML Primer: http://www.htmlprimer.com/
HTML Center: http://www.htmlcenter.com/

Copyright & Music Law

Why/How to Copyright Your Music: http://www.promusicforum.com/articles/copyrights.html
Gigalaw.com Discussion List: http://www.gigalaw.com/discuss/index.html
U.S. Copyright Office: http://www.copyright.gov/
Sound Recordings Registration: http://www.copyright.gov/register/sound.html
Copyright & Fair Use: http://fairuse.stanford.edu/.
The Copyright Pages: http://www.reach.net/~scherer/p/copyrite.htm

Free E-mail Services

YahooMail: http://mail.yahoo.com
HotMail: http://www.hotmail.com
Free E-mail Address Directory: http://www.emailaddresses.com/
Internet E-mail List: http://www.internetemaillist.com/

Web Stats

FastStats:	http://mach5.com/products/faststats/index.html
WebSiteStory:	http://www.hitbox.com
Free Web Counter Reviews:	http://www.thefreesite.com/freecounters.htm
WebTrends:	http://www.webtrends.com

Maintenance Tools

LinkAlarm:	http://www.linkalarm.com/
Xenu's Link Sleuth (software):	http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html
LinkScan:	http://www.elsop.com/linkscan/quickcheck.html
Web Link Validator:	http://www.relsoftware.com/wlv/
NetMechanic:	http://www.netmechanic.com/
bCentral Web Tools:	http://www.bcentral.com/products/free.asp#tools
AnyBrowser.com:	http://www.anybrowser.com/
ZDNet's Download Library:	http://downloads-zdnet.com.com/3150-2181-0.html

Web Graphics and Images

FreeGraphics.com:	http://www.freegraphics.com
Image Cruncher (reduce image size):	http://www.spinwave.com/
Elated Pagekits:	http://www.elated.com/pagekits/
GUIStuff:	http://www.guistuff.com/
B8 Graphics:	http://www.b8graphics.com/
Bimsan's Web Graphics:	http://www.bimsan.net/free/
Web Plates to Go:	http://www.webplatestogo.com/
ByDesign Themesets:	http://www.graphicsbydezign.com/
Free Site Templates:	http://freesitetemplates.com/
Iron & Ivy Designs:	http://www.ironivy.com/
Full Moon Graphics:	http://www.fullmoongraphics.com/
Art for the Web:	http://www.webpagedesign.com.au/
Dreamweaver Templates:	http://www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/download/templates/
Kemford Websites:	http://www.kemfordwebsites.com
RedLeaf SiteStyles:	http://www.redleaf.co.uk/sitestyles/
4Templates.com:	http://www.4templates.com/
Template Monster:	http://www.templatemonster.com/
Steve's Templates:	http://www.steves-templates.com
A+ Templates:	http://www.aplustemplates.com/
Basic Templates:	http://www.basictemplates.com/
Zazoon:	http://www.zazoon.com/
CoolText:	http://www.cooltext.com/
CoolArchive:	http://www.coolarchive.com/
Flaming Text:	http://www.flamingtext.com/
FlashButtons:	http://www.flashbuttons.com
Macromedia Flash:	http://www.macromedia.com/software/flash/

Scripts, Forms, Site Tools and More

Using SSIs to Ease Maintenance: http://www.apromotionguide.com/usingssi.html
SSI to the Rescue: http://www.netmaking.com/articles/index.php/2/8
Webmaster's Guide to SSI: http://www.webreference.com/programming/ssi/intro/
BigNoseBird's SSI Page: http://www.bignosebird.com/ssi.shtml
The CGI Resource Index (SSI): http://cgi.resourceindex.com/Documentation/Server_Side_Includes/
Website Tips SSI Tutorials: http://www.websitetips.com/ssi/
HomePageTools: http://www.homepagetools.com/
HostedScripts: http://www.hostedscripts.com/
FreeTools: http://www.freetools.com
Web Site Tools: http://www.webpage-tools.com/
SiteGadgets: http://www.sitegadgets.com/
Bravenet Web Services: http://www.bravenet.com/
The CGI Directory: http://cgidir.com/Scripts/
Dynamic Drive DHTML Library: http://www.dynamicdrive.com/
JavaScript Kit: http://javascriptkit.com/
JavaScript Search (very cool): http://www.javascript-2.com/
EchoEcho: http://www.echoecho.com/
Scream Design Script Library: http://www.screamdesign.com/files/freebies/sl/index.html
Matt's Script Archive http://www.scriptarchive.com/
Everyone.net: http://www.everyone.net/
MyComputer.com: http://www.mycomputer.com/index2.html
Remotely Hosted Scripts: http://cgi.resourceindex.com/Programs_and_Scripts/Remotely_Hosted/
Free E-mail AutoResponders: http://www.sendfree.com or http://www.getresponse.com
Create Surveys, Registration Forms: http://www.formsite.com
Privacy Policy Generator: http://www.the-dma.org/library/privacy/creating.shtml
Ace Install (script installation): http://www.aceinstall.com/
Rent-A-Coder (programmers for hire): http://www.rentacoder.com/
InstallMyScript.com (starting at $20): http://www.installmyscript.com/

Sound Tools

RealOne Player: http://www.real.com/
MusicMatch Jukebox: http://www.musicmatch.com
Windows Media Technologies: http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/default.asp
Apple Quicktime: http://www.apple.com/quicktime/
MP3Machine: http://www.mp3machine.com/
Shareware Music Machine: http://www.hitsquad.com/smm
Music Software Tutorials & Tips: http://www.hitsquad.com/smm/tutorials.html
Streaming Audio Tutorials: http://streamingmediaworld.com/audio/tutor/
GoldWave (for editing WAV files): http://www.goldwave.com
Sound Forge (music editing): http://www.sonicfoundry.com/products/showproduct.asp?PID=668

E-Commerce Plug-Ins

CDStreet:	http://www.cdstreet.com
CCNow:	http://www.ccnow.com
Mal's E-Commerce (Cart Solution):	http://www.mals-e.com/
ClickBank:	http://www.clickbank.com
PayPal:	http://www.paypal.com
IBill:	http://www.ibill.com
InstaBill:	http://www.instabill.com
DigiBuy (downloadable products):	http://www.digibuy.com/
WebSiteBilling.com (recurring billing)	http://www.websitebilling.com
Verotel Billing Solutions (recurring):	http://www.verotel.com/
2CheckOut.com (recurring)	http://www.2checkout.com

Merchant Vendor Solutions

Merchant Card Services:	http://merchantcardservicesinc.com/
ECHO:	http://www.echo-inc.com/
Total Merchant Services:	http://www.totalmerchantservices.com/

Search Engine News, Tutorials and Services

Search Engine Watch:	http://www.searchenginewatch.com
RankWrite:	http://www.rankwrite.com
Spider-Food:	http://www.spider-food.net/
Wilson Internet Services:	http://www.wilsonweb.com
29 Ways to Promote your Web Site:	http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/checklist.htm
Virtual Promote:	http://www.virtualpromote.com
Search Engine Submission Tips:	http://www.searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/
Search Engine Optimization FREE!:	http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/01/23/index1a.html
Search Engine Guide:	http://www.searchengineguide.com/
PromotionWorld:	http://www.promotionworld.com/
SubmitCorner:	http://www.submitcorner.com/
Top 5 Ways to Attract Visitors:	http://www.zdnet.com/anchordesk/story/story_1894.html
Bruce Clay Tactics:	http://www.bruceclay.com/web_pt.htm
Search Engine Forums:	http://searchengineforums.com
Promoting Your Business Web Site:	http://www.webmarketingtoday.com/webmarket/promote.htm

Search Engine Optimization Specialists

Muse's Muse Online Marketing:	http://www.internet-marketing-mm.com/
SEO Consultants Directory:	http://www.seoconsultants.com/
SEMList.com:	http://www.semlist.com
SEOPros.com	http://www.seopros.org/search/directories.asp
10 Things to Ask a Promo Company:	http://www.netpost.com/tentoask.html

Promotion Tools

WordTracker (Keywords Report):	http://www.wordtracker.com/
Recommend-it.com:	http://www.recommend-it.com
Link-O-Matic:	http://www.linkomatic.com
Link Popularity Check:	http://www.linkpopularitycheck.com
Link Popularity Statistics:	http://www.marketleap.com/publinkpop/
Who's Linking to You?:	http://www.google.com/help/features.html#link
JimTools:	http://www.jimtools.com
AddPro:	http://www.addpro.com/
Webmaster Toolkit:	http://www.webmaster-toolkit.com
Submit Corner:	http://www.submitcorner.com/
Free Keyword Density Analyzer:	http://www.keyworddensity.com/
Free Meta Tag Analyzer:	http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/meta-check.html

News Readers

Google Groups:	http://groups.google.com/
Agent Newsreader:	http://www.forteinc.com

Mailing List Management

Mojo Mail:	http://mojo.skazat.com/
YahooGroups:	http://groups.yahoo.com/
Topica Email Publisher:	http://www.email-publisher.com
Other Services:	http://www.thefreesite.com/Email_Freebies/
Secrets of Successful Newsletters:	http://cgi.zdnet.com/slink?/adeska/ad1tltqp/4458:515999
Group Mail:	http://www.infacta.com/gm.html
Postcast Software:	http://www.postcast.com/

Free Content for Your Web Site

The Syndicator:	http://www.web-source.net/syndicator.htm
Article Announce:	http://www.web-source.net/article-announce.htm
FreeSticky:	http://www.freesticky.com/stickyweb/
EzineArticles.com:	http://www.ezinearticles.com/
IdeaMarkers.com:	http://www.ideamarketers.com/
Content Exchange:	http://www.content-exchange.com/
Free Content:	http://www.certificate.net/wwio/
ARA Content:	http://www.aracopy.com/

Newsfeeds

MoreOver:	http://www.moreover.com/
YellowBrix Vertical News:	http://yellowbrix.com/pages/www/index.nsp?id=isyndicate_branded_content
NewsHub:	http://www.newshub.com/

Recommended Independent Music eZines

The Music Biz Academy Digest:	http://www.musicbizacademy.com/subscribe.htm
The Muse's Muse:	http://www.musesmuse.com/musenews.html
MusicDish:	http://www.musicdish.com/
The Buzz Factor:	http://www.thebuzzfactor.com
The Bard's Crier	http://thebards.net/crier/
Indie-Music.com News:	http://www.indie-music.com/
Goodnight Kiss:	http://www.goodnightkiss.com/subsc.html
The DiY Report:	http://www.gajoob.com/diyreport/

Where to Send Your Press Release

Mi2N: Music Industry News Net:	http://www.mi2n.com/
PR Web:	http://www.prweb.com/
The Music Biz Academy:	http://www.musicbizacademy.com/submit.htm
dmusic:	http://www.dmusic.com
Pressbox:	http://www.pressbox.co.uk/index.html
Harmony Central:	http://www.harmony-central.com/
BandRadio:	http://www.bandradio.com/news/submissions/
Galaris:	http://www.galaris.com
eReleases:	http://www.ereleases.com/
Internet News Bureau:	http://www.newsbureau.com/
The Press Release Network:	http://www.pressreleasenetwork.com/
EWorldWire:	http://www.eworldwire.com/

Banner Adverts and Articles

FastClick:	http://www.fastclick.com
Advertising.com:	http://www.advertising.com
MusicVision:	http://www.musicvision.com/
ValueClick:	http://www.valueclick.com/
BURST!:	http://www.burstmedia.com/
Free Banner Services:	http://www.thefreesite.com/Webmaster_Freebies/Banner_Freebies/
GW Web Design:	http://www.gwwebdesign.com/portfolio-frame.html
Free AdDesigner:	http://www.addesigner.com/
OrbitCycle Banner Rotation Software:	http://www.orbitcycle.com/
AdButler Banner Rotation Software:	http://www.adbutler.com/
Banner Advertising (General)	http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/ad.htm
Do Banner Ads Work?:	http://www.deadlock.com/promote/promotion/banners.html
Banner Ad Placement Study:	http://www.webreference.com/dev/banners/
Secrets of a High Web Ad Click-Thru:	http://www.zdnet.com/anchordesk/story/story_2439.html
Are Banner Ads Banner Days Over?:	http://zdnet.com.com/2100-11-513964.html

Affiliate Program Directories

AssociatePrograms.com:	http://www.associateprograms.com/
Refer-It:	http://www.refer-it.com
I-Revenue:	http://www.i-revenue.net/
ClickQuick:	http://www.clickquick.com/
OnlineBusiness.com:	http://www.onlinebusiness.com/
Commission Junction:	http://www.cj.com
WebSponsors.com:	http://www.websponsors.com/
Web Affiliate Programs:	http://www.webaffiliateprograms.com/
ClickAffiliate.com:	http://www.clickaffiliate.com/

Affiliate Program Helps

AffiliateBlunders (common mistakes):	http://www.affiliateblunders.com/
Affiliate Program Solution Providers:	http://www.makemoneynow.com/resources/start_affiliate.html
User Ratings of Affiliate Software:	http://www.wilsonweb.com/wct4/affiliate-software.htm
MyAffiliateProgram (affiliate manager):	http://www.myaffiliateprogram.com/
AffiliateShop.com:	http://www.affiliateshop.com/
AffiliateTracking:	http://www.affiliatetracking.com/
AffiliateZone.com:	http://www.theaffiliateprogram.com/
SimpleAffiliate:	http://www.simpleaffiliate.com/
AffiliateAnnounce:	http://www.affiliate-announce.com/
FusionQuest:	http://www.freefiliate.com/
How to Set Up Your Own Program:	http://www.associateprograms.com/search/howto.shtml

Search & Research Tools

FindSpot:	http://www.findspot.com
FASTSearch:	http://www.alltheweb.com/
Information Please:	http://www.infoplease.com/
Research It:	http://www.itools.com/
ixquick:	http://www.ixquick.com/
AskJeeves:	http://www.askjeeves.com
Researchville:	http://www.researchville.com/
Search Engine Colossus:	http://www.searchenginecolossus.com/
Search Engine Guide:	http://www.searchengineguide.com/

Other Tools

Random Number Generator:	http://www.freetoolkit.net/textnum/tool.php?tool=rndnum

Final Words

At the beginning of this book, I asked a simple question. Can you really make money and advance your career selling music on the Internet? The answer, as I hope you have seen, is a resounding YES!

If you take the suggestions in this book to heart, you have several months of hard work ahead of you. And while the task may seem a bit overwhelming, just start simple. Begin at the beginning, as they say. If you're just starting out, don't worry about affiliate programs, advertising, and all that yet. Just design a professional-looking site, optimize it and get listed on the search engines. Next, use the targeting and exposure-creating strategies I've talked about to build your site traffic, slowly, but surely over time. Generate that buzz! It's a long process, but worth it. You can do it! I did it, and if I can do it, you can, too!

One final piece of advice: Stay focused! It's easy to get distracted by all the hype and hoopla! You may find yourself going along just fine and then realize you've spent two weeks working on something that's not going to improve your exposure or your sales! Create a plan and stick to it. Yes, you can be flexible, but with each new task you take on ask yourself whether that task will really move your career forward... or is it just taking up your time?

I hope that you have found this book to be helpful and useful. I welcome your comments about it. Please e-mail me at dnevue@rainmusic.com and let me know what you think. If I can improve upon it, or there's a topic or subject you think I should cover that I have not, let me know.

This book is currently being updated twice a year to reflect the ongoing changes that occur on the Internet. If at any time you would like to upgrade your copy of this book to the current version, feel free to contact me for special 'upgrade' prices.

Also, do not forget the *Lifetime Update* option. For a one-time charge of just $20 you can receive PDF updates of this book every time I update it. Just visit http://www.musicbizacademy.com/bookstore/lifetime.htm to sign up.

Once again, thank you for purchasing this book. I wish you luck, success, and much more music to come.

David Nevue
The Music Biz Academy
http://www.musicbizacademy.com
http://www.davidnevue.com
dnevue@rainmusic.com

Be sure to check out our other products:

Music Is Your Business
The Indie Bible
The Musician's Atlas
The Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook
How to Build a Music Web Site that Sells

Available at the Music Biz Academy Bookstore: http://www.musicbizacademy.com/bookstore