



## Publicity

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*This section discusses the functions of a record label publicity department. At this point, you may also want to review the StarPolish dedicated section on [Press and Publicity](#) for more details and do-it-yourself publicity tips.*

In the real world, “publicity” and “public relations” can be loosely defined terms much like “marketing.” But in the record business, publicity is a very specific area. The publicity department is responsible for securing *press* and *television appearances*.

### Press

Press consists of any written material that would garner publicity for you, your band members and your project. It includes record reviews, live show reviews, interviews, features, stories, mentions or even the running of a photo with a caption. There is no limit to the kinds of publications that publicists pitch to secure press. Here are some examples of the norm:

1. Traditional national music magazines (*Rolling Stone, Spin*)
2. Alternative national music magazines (*Alternative Press, Bikini*)
3. Major daily newspapers (*The New York Times, Washington Post*)
4. Entertainment weekly papers (*Village Voice, The City Paper, Time Out, Creative Loafing*)
5. National lifestyle magazines (*Gear, Details, Maxim*)
6. National fashion magazines (*Vogue, Elle*)
7. National urban publications (*Vibe, The Source*)
8. Teen magazines (*Seventeen, Teen People, J-14*)
9. Musician magazines (*Guitar, Guitar Player, Modern Drummer, Keyboard*)
10. Sports magazines with music sections (*Snowboarder, Surfing, Skiing*)
11. Major city weekly magazines (*Los Angeles, New York*)
12. Fanzines (regional DIY publications like *Seconds, Lollipop, or Pit*)

Your press campaign is tailored to your kind of music. If you’re an alternative or rock band, most all of the music magazines and fanzines are appropriate. If you are a pop act, the mainstream publications, fashion mags and teen press would be appropriate. The local weekly publications are, however, appropriate for all genres.

### The Staff

The promotion staff at a label consists of two tiers: the national promotion staff and the local promotion staff.

The national promotion staff works from the main office of the label (sometimes the national staff is split between NY and LA), and is made up of “format heads.” There are usually two or three people for each radio format, who concentrate only on that format. Formats are: Top 40, R&B, Crossover/Dance, Modern Rock/Alternative, Rock, Adult Contemporary (A/C), Triple A and College Radio.

The local promotion staff can be anywhere from 8 to 20 staff members who are each assigned regions around the country. The “locals” are responsible for getting airplay at all formats at all commercial stations in their territory (urban usually has its own separate local promotion staff). Typically, the locals’ territories coincide with where the regional sales branch offices are located. But sometimes the locals are in areas where there is no branch (like Miami or Denver) and they work from home. The locals cover *all formats* in their region and are responsible for getting airplay based on the direction they get from the national staff. Loosely speaking, a local has a different boss for each format.

If you are a touring artist, you will spend lots of time with the locals while you are on the road. They will try to make the most of your visit in their market by getting you on-air radio interviews, carting you around to meet radio programmers, having dinners in your honor where programmers will be invited, bringing programmers to

your show, etc. They will work you to the bone if you let them. Word to the wise: let them.

Remember, at StarPolish we are firm believers that the harder you work, the better your luck gets.

### **Online Press**

Just about every single major publication has an online division. Reviews, features, addenda, additional photos and other content can supplement a piece in the printed publication. But also, online publications are an additional source for press. See my section on [Online Marketing](#).

### **Television**

Another responsibility of the publicity department is garnering television appearances. Many shows are “gettable” in the early stages of developing an artist, such as USA Network's *Farmclub.com*, *Later* with Craig Kilborn, and virtually all of the locally produced cable shows such as *Jam TV* in Chicago. The big guns are *Late Night* with Conan O'Brien, *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno, *The Late Show* with David Letterman, and of course the ever-coveted *Saturday Night Live*. Other unique TV opportunities exist like HBO's *Reverb* or PBS' *Sessions on West 54th Street*.

### **Publicity Photos**

Even before pitching your record to the press world, your publicist will be heavily involved very early in the life of your record. He or she will be involved in the process of choosing your photographer for your first photo shoot (see [Creative Services](#)) and will also participate in the approval process of the first run of publicity photos. A publicist needs at least two black-and-white photos, which will be duplicated en masse with your logo (and identifying captions if applicable). These are primarily used for dailies, weeklies and fanzines. At least two color photos (duplicated as slides) are also needed to service to the color magazines. Given the growing number of web-based 'zines and music sites, you may also want to have scanned digital images (both low- and high-resolution), which can be emailed, ready. The more approved photos there are, the better. If your publicist and your product manager deem it necessary, you may schedule another photo shoot after about three months after your record's release to service the press with a fresh new batch of photos.

### **Bio**

The creation of your bio (or “biography”) is another publicist responsibility that is addressed very early. About the same time you are meeting with your Product Manager and Art Director for the first time, you will also meet your publicist (who, like the Product Manager and Art Director either volunteer for or are assigned to your project). Your publicist will be familiar with your record, your sound and your image and will already have a good idea of how to approach your bio. Usually, a publicist assigns a bio to an outside writer who is a freelance writer or music critic. Rarely do bios get written in-house at a label, but it does happen. Your writer will interview you at length, either in person or via the phone to obtain quote and devise an outline for your bio.

You and your publicist will see the first draft at which time you may make any changes before the final approved bio is printed.

This may be a good moment to review the StarPolish section on [Presentation Materials](#), which deals with related issues.