



Music And The Internet : CyberMarketing And Promotion

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At this point, your site is well underway. You've created a fabulous website that will impress all who see it, that will bring you, your music and your product directly to your users. The question now is: how do you get people to actually come and visit your site? How do you turn your site into a promotional vehicle? How do you create a truly pervasive presence for yourself online?

Sadly, creating a great website is not enough. The purpose of your site is to get people interested in your band, your music and your product. The point is to attract users and feed information to them. The site serves to feed the info; you must do marketing and promotion, both online and offline, in order to attract the users.

GETTING LISTED IN INTERNET DIRECTORIES AND SEARCH ENGINES

After you've created your site, the first crucial step is to get your site included on all of the major Internet indexes and search engines. That way, when a user searches for "Sacred Baboon" on Yahoo! or Excite, he/she is going to get your site URL plus description listed prominently above the 2000 other sites that make reference to that same phrase. This is a huge step in the promotion of your site, and if done well it can yield fabulous results. But it's not a simple process, so get ready to do some work.

Just to clarify, an Internet index is not the same thing as a search engine. But the difference is a pretty thin line. The distinction is not so much how they operate for the end user, but how they function internally. A search engine (such as Excite or GoTo) works by sending out a "spider" to find as many documents as possible that fit the search criteria. Search engines are, for the most part, highly automated. Indexes (such as Yahoo! and the DMOZ.org directory) rely on human editors to choose, rank and classify documents. What this means to you is that you're going to need to perform a variety of different tasks in order to ensure quality placement in all of the top search engines and indexes. Start by readying your site for the submission process.

SEARCH ENGINES:

Optimizing Your Site For Submission

Hopefully, you've already heeded my advice and are using your own licensed domain URL as opposed to a "Free Homepage" site URL. As I mentioned before, Internet indexes and search engines are far less likely to include a "Free Homepage" site in their listings-- or if they do include your site, it's bound to be a low rung on the ladder. A licensed domain, such as www.sacredbaboon.com, is considered to be a much more serious and appreciable venture than, say, <http://hometown.aol.com/yourusername/myhomepage/myband.html>.



Assuming you already have your own domain, the first thing you should do is add "meta tags" to your Web pages. A meta tag is a special HTML command that provides information about the Web page that it lives on. Meta tags are hidden in the code of the page and do not affect how the page is displayed. Instead, they provide information such as who created the page, how often it is updated, what the page is about, and which keywords represent the page's content. Many search engines and indexes will use this information to organize and classify your pages. The [Meta Tag Generator](#) will walk you through the process and create your meta tags for you. Be sure to create meta tags for every single page of your site. That way, every page has a chance of getting listed.

You'll notice that the Meta Tag Generator asks you for the title, keywords, and description of your web page. Don't slack on this. Put a lot of thought into filling this form out for every page of your site. Don't repeat too many words or phrases, spell everything correctly, follow the Generator's guidelines and write well: you may think that this information is just going to be stored in your source code, but it's actually going to show up as your Webpage description on lots of different search engines, and folks are going to be able to read it. Here's an example of how one could fill out this form:

Title: The Sacred Baboon band audio page: Listen to our music

Keywords: Sacred Baboon band music audio MP3 RealPlayer

Description: The Sacred Baboon Band: rocking the New York City scene with a combo of rock'n'roll, funk, punk and polka music since 1998. Listen to our RealPlayer audio clips and download our MP3s.

When you complete the form and hit submit, the Meta Tag Generator will e-mail you immediately with the HTML code. All you have to do is cut and paste it directly into your Webpage html text, in between the opening tag and the tag.

Submission Utilities

Submission utilities are truly a godsend. They are basically Internet robots that take the information you feed to them and submit it to hundreds of different search engines. They save you a lot of work, and many of them, thankfully, are free to use. Some are more effective than others, and some work better with certain search engines, so the best thing to do is utilize as many different submission utilities as possible. You also need to *keep* using them (which is why the free ones are so nice), so that your site remains up in the top listings. When you first begin using the submission utilities, I suggest you use one every week until you see that you've got some pretty good listings in a good cross-section of search engines. However, don't use *more* than one per week. Many of these utilities submit to the same search engines, and if a search engine receives more than one submission for the same site at the same time it may throw the submission out entirely. And even after you've noticed some of your listings, you still want to continue submitting, but you can cut it down to about once a month.



Think about subscribing to the awfully boring-yet-informative [Search Engine Watch](#) newsletter. It'll keep you up to date on new search engines and new utilities, and give you tips on how to optimize your submissions. Another thing to consider is whether or not you want to submit just your main Website URL, or if want to deal with deep submitting every page of your site. You'll get fewer listings if you only submit your main URL, but everyone will be directed to your main page. You'll get a lot more listings if you submit every page, but it'll take a lot longer and some search engines and indexes can get annoyed by this tactic and simply throw out your listing. If that happens you can always resubmit-- it's just a longer process.

[Self Promotion](#) assists you in registering your URL to all the important search engines and indexes. It's a great tool, and the site is chock full of information. You could probably learn all you need to know about getting listed in Internet search engines and indexes just by reading this site thoroughly. This guy knows what he's talking about! It's free to use, but for just \$10 (or more, it's a contribution) Self Promotion will give you priority service, store your data for a year and give you access to "Secret Net Tools." If you only use one submission utility, this is the one. But don't just use the utility-- read this site like it's the bible. So much of what you need to know is here. Do bear in mind that this site is built for the do-it-yourselfer, so get ready to learn, and expect to have to do a lot of work on your own.

[Jim Tools](#) is slicker than Self Promotion, but for some reason doesn't seem to yield as good results. Still, it's free, and it allows you to register with 52 major search engines, as well as submit your site to 100 "spam free" Free For All (FFA) link pages-- pages listing a massive number of links. Side note: If you decide to submit your site to FFA pages, it might be a good idea for you to set up a separate e-mail account just for these submissions. As Jim himself says, "FFA submitting creates a significant amount of e-mail from the operators of FFA pages." If you don't want your regular e-mail account clogged with submission responses, create a web based e-mail account at Hotmail, Yahoo or the like and use it for all of your site submissions. Jim Tools also offers a meta tag tutorial, a search engine forum, and a whole bunch of other useful Website tools.

[Announce It America](#) offers a free submission utility that will submit your URL to 300 search engines, directories, FFA links and classifieds. However, you might want to consider one of their pay-for-service options, as they are significantly more involved yet still relatively cheap. Their two pay-for-service options are currently priced at \$16.50 and \$20, and both options will submit your site to an additional 1209 promotional

sites. They will also manually submit your web site to Yahoo, which they claim “insures the accuracy of your submission,” although I personally think it’s best that you do it yourself. They will store your info for three months and also grant you access to their “Website Position Analyzer,” which monitors your web site’s rankings with the search engines.

[The Muse’s Muse](#) will promote your Website to over 350 locations-- for a price. They do not offer a free service, but on a positive (and important) note, they only work with music related websites. The Muse’s Muse is really just a one-woman operation, so if you have any troubles you can expect to get some personal attention. Like Announce It America, The Muse’s Muse offers a couple of different pricing plans. \$20, \$35 or \$50 gets you one, two or three months of submissions respectively, with e-mail reporting of results included.

Internet Indexes And Directories



Internet indexes, a.k.a. directories, are *not* search engines, and submission utilities (for the most part) will not be able to help you with them. Indexes do not “crawl” your site (that’s what a search engine spider does) or automatically catalogue your site. Instead, inclusions are determined by a human editor and must be submitted to a proper category. You really need to handle indexes gingerly, on a case-by-case basis. But you’re lucky-- you’ve already created an awesome site with your own domain name, and that’s what will impress the editors the most.

Unlike with search engines, you should probably submit only your main site URL, unless you truly feel that other pages of your site can stand alone and be categorized within other, separate categories. If you do decide to submit more than one of your pages, don’t submit more than three, and don’t submit them all at once. Let a few weeks go by before you try another, and always make your first submission your main site URL.

Finally, don’t get sneaky. Don’t try to submit both www.sacredbaboon.com and www.sacredbaboon.com/index.html in the hopes of getting listed twice. Don’t submit mirror sites. Don’t submit to inappropriate or unrelated categories. These tricks probably won’t work, and they will definitely irritate the editors that discover them. Yahoo and dmoz.org tell you straight up what they do and do not want in submissions. They’re telling you exactly what to do-- the best thing you can do for yourself is follow their instructions to the letter.

[Yahoo!](#) is the largest index on the web (although the Open Directory is not far behind nowadays). Even people that have never used the Internet have heard of Yahoo. So here’s how to get yourself submitted to Yahoo. First, locate your appropriate category. In your case it will probably be something like: Home > Entertainment > Music > Artists > Your Genre. Once you’ve isolated your genre (Yahoo can get pretty specific), click on the “How to suggest a site” link at the bottom of the page. It’ll walk you through the rest of the process, and as I said before, *follow their instructions to the letter*. After you submit your site, you’re going to have to wait about one to three weeks for a response. A quicker, and perhaps more successful route is to submit your site through the regional Yahoo index. If your site is in, or relates to, a country or region served by one of the international or regional Yahoo indexes, you might want to try to get listed in that index first. Many claim that it is easier to get accepted into the regional index, and if one Yahoo index accepts you, you almost always get into them all. At the very least, the fact that you are listed in the regional index could help you tremendously when you apply to the main index, so be sure to point out your regional status in your main submission form. On top of all this, read [Self Promotion’s](#) “Tips on getting listed in Yahoo” and Yahoo’s very own [submission tutorial](#). If Yahoo has listed you but they’ve gotten something wrong or you’re not happy with the listing, visit their [Change Your Listing](#) section. This is also where you go if you want to add yourself to another one of their categories.

Don’t feel bad if you’ve never heard of [The Open Directory Project](#), a.k.a. dmoz.org. It’s not a well-known directory in and of itself, but it filters information to some of the best-known search engines and directories around, such as Netscape, Lycos, HotBot, AltaVista, Google, NetFind (AOL’s engine) and more. Which means that if you get placed on dmoz.org, you’ll eventually be listed in all these engines. There’s a 2 to 3 week delay between being accepted to dmoz.org to being filtered down to the engines that accept [dmoz](http://dmoz.org) content. With The Open Directory you should probably be submitting your site somewhere under: Arts: Music: Bands and Artists. Then pick the 1st letter in your band name, click the “add URL” link in the upper right hand corner, and it’ll lead you through the rest of the process. Be sure to select the most specific category, as doing so will improve your chances of submission.

If your site still hasn't appeared on Yahoo or The Open Directory three weeks or more past the date of submission, it's probably time to check in. Write the editor a nice, non-inflammatory note and ask him/her (nicely!) if there's a reason that you are not yet listed. Ask if there's anything you could change about your listing or site in order to make it more worthy, and let him/her know if you've made any improvements to your site. Also include your site URL, your e-mail, the date that you originally submitted your listing and your desired category.

At the bottom of the category you selected at dmoz.org you'll find a link to your editor's profile. From there you can get his/her address. On yahoo, simply e-mail url-support@yahoo-inc.com. Or you can request reconsideration by mail or phone:

Yahoo! Corporation
3420 Central Expressway, 2nd floor
Santa Clara, CA 95051, USA
Listing Support Phone: 408-731-3333

GoTo.com is a strange operation-- it's like an index, but instead of having human editors deciding what will and will not be accepted, GoTo allows you to pay for placement. It sounds lame, but you usually don't end up spending too much. Still, check it out and decide for yourself. To get listed on GoTo you need to open an account with a minimum of \$25. With that account, you 'bid' on keywords that you want to target, with bids starting at one cent. I recommend that you bid the minimum (one cent) on approximately ten relatively good keywords, then bid higher (three to five cents) on the five to ten keywords that really matter to you. The higher you bid, the higher in the search results your site appears. You pay the bid amount each time someone clicks through to your site. Because GoTo is unlike any other engine or index out there, and because it involves you paying them, be sure you read all the fine print and understand the operation before you sign up.

About.com, Snap, LookSmart, and Go.com are some other, less popular but still vital, Internet indexes. Submit to them in much the same way you've done for Yahoo and The Open Directory, and you'll be covered.

GETTING INCLUDED IN ONLINE MUSIC DIRECTORIES AND WEBSITES



Online music sites and directories exist to bring attention to musicians and their art. That's why it amazes me how hard it can be to get some of these sites to pay attention to developing artists! On the other hand, there are some very flexible directories out there that allow you to upload all of your info, no fees and no approval required. The following is a list of some of the more popular music directories (at least at the time of writing). You should attempt to get coverage on all of these sites. As I said before, the more doors you leave open, the more people will find a way in.

A word of caution: Carefully read all the terms these sites ask you to accept before putting your stuff up on them-- in particular the sites that require you to upload your music. You want to know what rights (if any) you're giving away, and make sure you're comfortable with the arrangement.

The Ultimate Band List is one of the largest, most well known sites out there dedicated to listing both known and unknown artists. Happily, it's also one of the easiest sites to add your artist information to. All you've got to do is provide them with some listing info, a bio, an image, and some audio files (optional), and viola – you've got yourself an artist page on UBL. A nice perk is that once you have a page up, you become eligible to enter their band contests. Use their "Add/Edit Content" link to add your artist listing.

IUMA (The Internet Underground Music Archive) is right up there with UBL as one of the largest and easiest sites to add your info to. Unlike UBL, IUMA is dedicated exclusively to emerging artists. IUMA maintains

strategic partnerships with emusic.com, RollingStone.com and downbeatjazz.com, so by listing a page on IUMA you have a shot (however slim) at getting your music featured on these other sites as well. Simply visit the IUMA “Artists Only” section and create your page. It’s that easy.

[Garageband](#) allows you to create your own artist profile and upload your music via their “Musician’s Only” section. Once you’ve created your profile you can then choose to upload a track and take a shot at winning a recording contract “worth \$250,000”. Take note that Garageband’s “thing” is to have people review and vote on songs, so you pretty much need to upload some music here-- it doesn’t really make sense for you otherwise.

[FarmClub](#) offers a “hook-ups” section that allows you to create a mini-profile and upload some tracks. If you get a lot of votes, you could get on Farmclub.com TV. Farmclub.com also has an A&R staff, and being on the site could land you a record deal on Farmclub.com’s label. Beware, this site is pretty confusing and muddled, and once you upload your information, the page seems to get lost in the shuffle. Still, it’s a good place to include your artist info-- and if someone searches for you, your page will pop right up.

[EClef](#), “The music hub for music people”, is a lesser-known but rather nice site nonetheless. It’s kind of like a musical Yahoo-- it only includes and categorizes sites that have some association to music. Click through on “suggest a site” and you’ll be taken to a submission form that allows you to pick a category and submit your Website. EClef works quickly and will most likely include you in their listings within a week. ([RockBand](#) and [Indie-Music](#) are similar music directory sites that you should also submit your site to.)

[Listen.com](#) allows you to submit an artist for inclusion through their “Add Artist” page. Then human editors go through and make listings-- based on how you sound. Listen.com is completely geared towards audio. If you don’t mind letting them point to your music, they’ll give you a mini-bio and space on their site.

[IAM.com](#) is a relatively new site that allows artists to showcase themselves by creating their own “online portfolio.” I doubt that IAM’s claim to “connect you with the industry” will hold up (although the site is very “experience” heavy), but it can’t hurt to create your own portfolio.

StarPolish And of course, here you are at StarPolish.com. As you know, StarPolish is dedicated to helping artists with top-notch advice and assistance. But they also highlight the hardest working artists, assist them in selling their stuff and building their mailing lists, and [reward](#) them for their efforts with cash prizes, exposure to an impressive [A&R panel](#), and other assistance programs designed especially for emerging artists. You should definitely sign [yourself up](#).



EXCHANGING LINKS: Creating Banners And Buttons For Exchange

You can always exchange boring old text links, but if a site is willing to put up a button or banner for your site, you should certainly be able to offer them one. In fact, you should contact appropriate sites and pitch them on exchanging banners; it’ can’t hurt and you never know who will be interested.

On a page full of links, a button or banner will stand out amongst the crowd. A “button” is really just another name for a tiny banner. Buttons and banners come in various sizes. Of course, you could make them any size you want, but it’s good to conform to the industry standards on sizing on these points – that way, sites that agree to use your banners will have an easier time incorporating them into their site. The most common web-standard sizes are as follows:

Full banner – 468 X 60
 Half banner – 234 X 60
 Standard button – 120 X 60
 Micro button – 88 X 31

Other “banner facts” to take note of: GIF is the most common banner format. Making a fast-loading banner is critical. The words “Click Here!” can dramatically improve your click through rate. More people will click on a banner with a blue border (perhaps because blue is the normal color for hyperlinks). And finally, if a user has

not clicked on a banner after seeing it three times, a response is unlikely.

Thankfully, you don't have to go out and research all of this kind of stuff-- others have done it for you. There are even sites that will help you build your own banners for free. [Banner Tips](#) will tell you everything you need to know about banners, from creation to implementation. The [Four Corners Banner Creation Tool](#) will help you create and refine your banner-- they offer over 100 categorized background templates and a ton of fonts to choose from. Finally, I recommend [GifWizard](#) as the best online tool you can use to reduce the size of your banners (and other graphics, for that matter). GifWizard can compress your banners up to 90%, which makes them much quicker to load.

Obtaining Reciprocal Links

Reciprocal links happen when two websites agree to link to one another. One of the best ways to spread yourself and your site around the web is to make friends. Make friends with similar artists, with sites that specialize in your genre of music, with indie web 'zines, with underground record stores, etc. Get to know your neighbors on the Web. Then trade links with them! It's pretty simple, and can be a very effective traffic booster. Here's one way to go about arranging a link:

Identify sites that have content that is complimentary to your site. If you're a rockabilly band, go find a bunch of other rockabilly sites, as well as old-school tattoo sites, hot rod sites, pin up girlie sites... you get the picture. For each site that you find, send an e-mail to the Webmaster. Make clear how much you like his/her site, explain what your band and what your site is like, and then suggest that both of your sites could benefit from a reciprocal link. Your e-mail might look something like this:

I've been enjoying your site, www.hotrodshotchicks.com, for a few weeks now. I dig your site-- I've got it bookmarked and I check it out nearly every day. I'm in a rockabilly band called Sacred Babaloo, we've got a pretty kick ass website at www.sacredbabaloo.com. Come on over and check us out! If you think we're A-OK, perhaps you'd be into trading banners or links? I've attached some of our banners at the bottom of this e-mail, so if you'd like to put one of them up at your site, I'd be more than happy to include your site on our links page. If you've got a banner I'll toss that up, if not I'll include a rockin' site description with your link. Keep me posted!

I think you'll be surprised by how many Webmasters will be amenable to this, especially if you're willing to put either a banner or a link and description of their site up. Everyone wants to increase their traffic, and if they can do so by linking to cool band sites, then all the better. If you were to set up approximately 100 reciprocal links, you could conceivably generate an extra 2,000 page views per month.

Banner Exchange Services

Banner exchange networks are groups of web sites that trade links and banners with each other. Typically how it works is you'll create a space on your web site, preferably on a links page, to display the group's banner (which is served from their server, you just add their HTML droplet to your code). In exchange, your banner, which you create and submit, will be displayed on other member's sites. If you're lucky enough to get your banner placed on a cool site, it could potentially bring a lot of traffic your way. Here are a couple of exchange networks you can join. For a more detailed list of networks, visit [Banner Tips](#).

[Link Exchange](#), driven by Microsoft bCentral, is the largest free banner exchange network with over 1,000,000 members. They are open to everyone, from the smallest personal site to the largest Web advertiser. You display two banners on your site in exchange for having your banner displayed once on other member's sites. They also give you free stats, and allow you to choose which banners appear on your site, as well as which type of site your banner appears on.

[Banner Co-op](#) allows you to earn a one-to-one banner exchange. Open to all, the Banner Co-op is completely free. Join as an associate member so that you don't have to put the Co-op membership icon on the front page of your site.

[IntelliClicks](#) was the first banner exchange network to offer the ability to include sound effects with your banner ad, no plug-ins required. The sound clip(s) are played when a visitor moves their mouse over the banner. You can join IntelliClicks and participate for free as long as you have free credits available-- they start you out with 1,000 credits, which should last you for a while.

Web Rings

Web rings are simply a conglomerate of sites that are linked up together because they share a common interest or goal. If you're in the right webring, it can effectively drive a lot of traffic to your site. As an example, let's say you're a Jam band. A user visiting a Phish fansite might notice a banner on that site that says, "Official member of the Jam Band Web Ring. To go to the next site in this ring, click here." The user clicks, and is taken to another site that is a member of that ring. If you are a member of that ring, the next site they visit could be your site. Get it? It's easy to join a webring, or even more than one. Check out the [Webring Directory](#). Find rings that are common to you, your music and your site. If you can't find a ring that exemplifies your style, consider starting your own! To join a Ring, simply visit the "Ringmaster's" Website. The process for joining varies from Ring to Ring, so you'll need to pay attention to the instructions found there. If there are a ton of rings that match your content, narrow it down to the "best" three or four rings and join only those. "Best" often means the rings with the most members, but not always-- visit some of the sites within the rings to see which sites have the best content and design, and the most activity. By belonging to a webring of sites that get a lot of hits, your site will get hits by proxy.

BASIC CYBERMARKETING

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The following marketing tactics are not the most exciting things you could do with your time. They don't have much flair or pizzazz. But they are the basics, which means they are absolutely vital for a burgeoning artist website. Use them all, and use them often.

Online Mailing List

As I mentioned in the Site Content section, If a user is visiting your website, he probably wouldn't mind being signed up to receive a weekly e-newsletter from you, or mailings about upcoming gigs. StarPolish has an entire section devoted to [Mailing Lists](#) and how to use them to develop your act, which you should read if you haven't already.



Once a user registers for your online mailing list, you should send him a sign-up confirmation e-mail-- if not right away, then at least within the week. If a user signs up for street mail only, then simply send him an e-mail confirming that you have received his request and will be mailing him info on band news and upcoming gigs, but that no more e-mails will be sent to him. Let him know that if he changes his mind about receiving e-mail notifications he can simply e-mail you at band@sacredbaboon.com and ask to be added to the e-mail mailing list, and you will add him right away. Then just send him out street mailings whenever you have them.

Do the opposite if a user signed up for only e-mail notification. Let the user know that you have received her request and will be e-mailing her information on band news and upcoming gigs, but that no street mailings will be sent to her. Let her know how often she can expect your e-mails. Finally, let her know that if she changes her mind about receiving postal notifications she can simply e-mail your at band@sacredbaboon.com and ask to be added, and you will add her right away.

If a user has signed up for both online and postal mailings, tell him congratulations, he'll be getting both. A notification of some kind is key, because it reminds people that they have signed up for something. It reminds them that the e-mails they are going to be receiving are solicited. After you serve your user with notification, be prepared to follow through. Your e-mail newsletter, or e-newsletter, should go out bi-weekly or monthly (or more often if you genuinely have new stuff to say). Try to send your e-newsletter at the same time every period. Be strict about this-- if you're going to send it out on Wednesdays, shoot for "every other Wednesday at 6PM." If you send it out during the weekend, it may be the top item in many people's office e-mailboxes first thing on Monday morning, which can be cool. Be sure to make your e-newsletter interesting, informative and to the point. It doesn't have to be a novel, but it should be witty and it should include the latest band news and all

upcoming gigs. Feel free to entertain your users with one or two non-band related things, like a “this week in music news” section, an “amusing link of the week,” or an “our favorite new band of the week” link.

Be diligent about Blind Carbon Copying (BCCing) everyone on your e-newsletter. A lot of people, including myself, hate mass mailings that include the e-mail addresses for all to see. Respect your user’s privacy. And be very careful with your formatting. Use only simple text, since it’ll probably be translated to simple text if you try to get fancy and will then look like crap on other systems. Don’t embed URLs, simply include them as text. And finally, always include a link at the bottom where people can go to change their subscription information (change their e-mail or mailing address), or unsubscribe if they’d like.

You should work hard to build a strong online mailing list, as it is an important tool and an impressive asset for a developing artist.

Cross Marketing – Cyberspace Meets The Street

With every piece of promotion you do, you should somehow tie in your website. In it’s most simple form, this involves placing your URL prominently on every flyer, poster and [promotional item](#) that you make. Putting your URL on just about everything you make is very, very important-- and I’m sure that I don’t have to tell you why. But more elaborate [cross promotions](#) can be fairly simple to set up, and they can receive a much stronger response. The following are some ideas for cross promotions that involve both the cyber world and the real world.

When you have upcoming gigs, think about some kind of Web promotion that involves the venue, like “print out this page and show it to the bartender during our set, and get a free drink!” Of course, something like this would be pending the approval of the venue. But many venues will be into something like this if you explain that it garners them prominent placement on your website). Advertise this “coupon” on all of your posters, flyers, and other items promoting the gig so as to drive traffic to your website, and advertise it on your website to drive traffic to the gig.

In your record release packaging, include little promos that say; “Come to our website and visit the ‘secret download section’ at www.sacredbaboon.com/secret.html. Type in this ‘secret code’ and you’ll be able to download a special live version of our most popular song for free!” A promotion like this can both bolster interest in the CD and drive traffic to your site-- people just love being in on a secret.

Hold a “guerrilla URL contest” on your site, in which fans send in photos of the craziest place they’ve ever managed to write or place your URL. (Expect to get a lot of pictures of breasts, which depending on your tastes may not be a bad thing). Put all of the photos up on your site, and maybe the winner gets his/her photo on the back cover of your next album or in the liner notes. You can use the other photos as backgrounds for your flyers, as posters, etc. Not only will you get some wacky submissions that you’ll be able to use in your on and offline efforts, your URL will be all over the world in the strangest places, thanks to your fans.

Create a unique piece of [merch](#) that relates directly to the web and your site. Create Sacred Baboon mousepads, for example, or enhanced CDs that give “Special info” to those that play it on their CD ROM.

Whatever you decide to do, the most important thing is to just be creative! Think up original events and promotions and pitch them to the parties involved. Chances are, people will want to be a part of your good idea.

Online Press and Media

Just as you are surely mailing [press kits](#) to traditional print [media](#), make sure that you are promoting yourself to Web magazines and online editorial sources as well. Some cyber mags reach a much larger audience than their print counterparts. The best place to find listings of online editorial sites is sonicnet.com. From the sonicnet main page, click on the genre (or genres) that describe your sound. Then click on “Magazines” in the upper right hand corner. You’ll get a long listing of online magazine sites that relate to that particular genre of music. Also check out [Insound’s Zinestand](#), which has an impressive list of indie-rock-leaning ‘zines (both online and print media).

Visit the online press/media sites that interest you, and from there try to determine which one are open to receiving and reviewing info from developing artists. If the site has a clear area to which you can submit your information for review and/or inclusion, go for it-- just follow the site's directions. If not, e-mail one of the editors (you can usually find an editor's e-mail in the "About Us" or "Who We Are" section of the site) and tell her a little bit about yourself. Let her know what she can find on your site, tell her you would love to have her do a write up of your album/gig/site/downloads/whatever. Be sure to include your URL and contact info in the e-mail! Sell yourself to everybody out there, down to the smallest e-zines. Review the StarPolish section on [Press and Publicity](#) for more advice on working the press. The more glowing reviews you get, the more fodder you'll have for your [press kit](#)!

GUERRILLA CYBER MARKETING

Believe it or not, many major labels use guerilla marketing tactics. Some of the largest websites in the world still hire people to do their "underground" campaigns for them. That's because even if you've got 20 million to spend in ad sales, guerilla marketing still gets the job done by reaching people that would otherwise pay no attention to you. Think of this: one of the main marketing tactics of major labels and websites is free, and 100% available to you!

The idea behind guerilla marketing is gettin' down and dirty in the cracks and spaces that high profile marketing campaigns don't really reach. In the offline world this consists of flyerling, stickering, sniping posters, spray painting sidewalks and the like. In the online world it's kind of the same thing, just with a cyber twist. The goals are definitely the same. You want to reach a large amount of people, yet you want to reach people that are going to, just maybe, care.

<Related Sites, Chats, BBS

The first thing you want to do is localize a group of people that are going to possibly care about your music. Sit down and write out a list of ten to twenty high-profile artists or groups that you would say sound similar to you, or that have influenced you in some way. Then try to reach their fans, as those fans could become your fans, too.



Let's say that you're a solo female singer/songwriter that sounds a bit like Ani DiFranco. In other words, fans of Ani might conceivably be your fans as well-- they just don't know about you yet. First, go to Ani's official site. (sonicnet.com has a great artist directory where you can look up links to artists' official sites, label sites and fansites). If there's a chat room, get in there, talk a bit and establish a rapport-- then tell people that you'd love it if they'd go check out some of your tunes at your site. If there's a BBS, get in there and post on some topics, and then get around to mentioning that you are inspired by Ani, that you are a singer/songwriter, that you've got your songs up on your website, and that you'd love to get feedback from anyone that might be interested in going to take a listen. On the official sites you want to be very careful and polite, so that you can actually establish a bond with the other users, who occasionally include the label personnel, artist managers, and even the artist herself. Be equally cautious at some of the more professional, popular fansites. Moving away from these locales, you can start to get a bit more brazen. Visit all of the fansites, and at the less professional ones you can simply post something somewhere about yourself, your music and your site. If there's no BBS, try using the guestbook. If there's no guestbook, try e-mailing the Webmaster and asking him to check out your site and maybe write something up about it. Some users may get annoyed at what they see as merely "self promotion," but it's just as likely that other users will be interested in checking out your site.

And you don't have to limit yourself to artists. If you or your music is at all political, visit sites and newsgroups dedicated to causes you support. Have fun, get into the fray, and then drop your site. Say something like, "By the way, I'm a musician and my song 'No rights' deals directly with this issue. You can check it out at my website, here's the URL." And even if you're not political, you've got to be into something-- skateboarding, movies, comic books, whatever. There's probably a whole host of sites, chat rooms and BBS' dedicated to those things; get in there and find creative ways to promote your music.

Also keep an eye on what the major music sites are up to. If you see that VH1.com is going to host a chat with Ani (or any of the artists on your list), make sure that you're there. You're not going to be able to get your URL into the main chat area, as the submitted questions are filtered by a moderator, but you will be able to spread the word to people in your "row." Move around from row to row and tell everybody about you and your site.

In all circumstances, be as tactful as possible. If you run into a fansite that absolutely forbids "self-promotion",

respect their wishes and steer clear. Feel out each situation with some intelligence. And if you occasionally cross the line, don't worry too much. Just try not to radically overstep it on a daily basis. All of this is a lot of work, so do try to have fun with it. If these are truly artists that have inspired you, you should *enjoy* being involved in their sites and chats. Become a part of their web community, and they'll be less likely to view your "self-promotion" as an invasion, because it won't be-- it will be part of the scene.

If you are nervous about any of this, here's one sneaky thing that you *could* do to protect yourself: open a web based e-mail account at yahoo or hotmail or the like. Give yourself an e-mail that implies that you are a big fan of your own band, such as Sacredfan@yahoo.com. Make sure that none of your personal information is profiled for anyone to see, because the idea here is to pretend to be someone you are not-- i.e., a fan of yourself, as opposed to... yourself. That way, when you write about your act, it really doesn't seem like self-promotion, but just telling folks about an artist you love. Of course, some people are going to see right through this, but it still sets you one degree away from the heat. And, at the very least, hatemail (if any) will be localized in one web account, which you can close down at any time.

Keep in mind that these are all ideas and practices that many artists are currently using. It's important to know your options, but equally important for you to follow your own path; only pursue cybermarketing strategies that you are comfortable with.

That being said...

Spam?

Warning: the following section contains some very sneaky, underhanded and just plain evil (perhaps even illegal?) promotional tricks. I AM NOT suggesting or urging you to pursue these strategies. I'm just making you aware of what some other artists are doing. Proceed at your own risk. That is all.

Spamming, or sending out unsolicited "junk e-mail," is universally considered rude and annoying. But there's a reason that people keep doing it-- it has been known to work. However, it tends to work a lot better when you target a specific group:

Let's say there's a southern style hip-hop artist that goes by the name of Sacred B. If he sends out an e-mail promoting his music to a sixty year old grandmother of twelve in Utah, she's *probably* not going to care or will be annoyed. But if he targets people who love hip-hop and who routinely listen to Juvenile and OutKast, he might get a good response. Still, a large amount of those spammed are not going to be receptive, so B's got to be sure to cover his tracks:

If he was smart, B opened a Web based e-mail account, and made his address something like `new_hiphop@hotmail.com`. He didn't refer to his act in the e-mail address, and didn't use his real information when he signed up for the account. He made up a name, and made up all of the required information. Many accounts have policies against spamming and, if enough complaints are lodged against B, his account may be shut down. In that case, it's better that they do not have B's true information. Additionally, B likely did not write his spam e-mails as though they were from him. He pretended that he was a local talent showcaser or a promoter. He wrote the e-mail as though the person he was mailing it to signed up to receive it, because chances are, in today's internet world, they're not going to remember what they did or did not sign up for. B also made sure that he BCC'd everyone-- he didn't let anyone on his spam list see anyone else's name. He made the subject something that would get them to open the e-mail, not something that sounded generic and vague, which would have increased the chance that they would trash the e-mail without ever even opening it. A good title would have been: "The Hip-Hop Beat: Juvenile, Sacred B, OutKast." The actual message body contained three short paragraphs. First paragraph: news on Juvenile's latest video. Second paragraph: a "press release" regarding Sacred B, an amazing new artist in the style of Juvenile and OutKast. The "press release" made particular note of Sacred B's professional and informative Website that can be found at www.sacredb.com. Third paragraph: a review of OutKast's latest single. Finally, B signed the e-mail with a false name and a false title: James Smith, VP Marketing, Southern State Productions.

Perhaps you're wondering where B got the e-mails for this little mailing of his? He pulled them from fansite Bulletin Boards and fansite guestbooks. Went to AOL chatrooms dedicated to rap and hip-hop and copied down all of the names. Looked up AOL profiles with the words "Juvenile," "OutKast," or "Southern Rap" in them and

pulled those e-mails. Went to EBay, looked up everyone selling hip-hop merchandise and took down their e-mails. If he did it thoroughly, this kind of address "stealing" resulted in a list of thousands of e-mails. Remember; he made sure that he did not use his real information or e-mail for any part of this process. He really didn't want this all coming back to him, because if it did, it might have been messy. He keeps his list of "stolen" e-mails apart from other address lists he may maintain, and adds to it whenever he can. He sends out an e-mail to this list about once a month. If anyone e-mails him back ranting and raving about getting spammed, he does not respond-- simply removes their e-mail from the list and makes sure that you he doesn't accidentally add them again at a later date (he keeps a list of "no e-mail" people). And there you go-- If there is a right way to Spam, B's doing it right, because his list is targeted and many of the people on it will be interested in the information he sends.